Football Premiership: Arsenal 4 Everton 0

Arsenal are champions

David Lacey at Highbury

IN THE end Arsenal passed the winning-post without either breaking their stride or using the whip. An emphatic 4-0 victory over Everton last Sunday before an ecstatic crowd confirmed their 11th championship — their first as winners of the Premiership — and Arsène Wenger as the first foreign manager to lead a team to the English title.

Coronations should never be postponed — that only invites a coup — and there was never much chance of Arsenal having to wait any longer for the three points they needed to put themselves beyond the reach of Manchester United. They were in a different league from Everton, a statement which will become an actuality next Sunday if Bolton win at Chelsea or Coventry beat Howard Kendall's sagging side at Goodison.

Last Sunday Everton's first relegation since 1951 appeared only slightly less of a foregone conclusion than Arsenal's first title since 1991. Their resistance collapsed once Slaven Bilic had headed into his own net after four minutes.

A goal either side of half-time from Marc Overmars turned the rest of the match into a carnival and then Tony Adams, the Arsenal captain, provided the perfect ending with a fourth in the penultimate minute. It was Arsenal's 10th successive league victory, a club record, and extended their unbeaten run in the Premiership to 18 games.

Manchester United could not live with this inexorable surge, so reminiscent of Liverpool in the eighties. Wenger picked out Arsenal's two victories over United as the crucial results, and rightly so.

Now the new champions have just a week to contemplate their second league and FA Cup Double. They meet Newcastle United at Wembley on May 16 and are even stronger favourites to win this final than they were in 1971, when they beat Liverpool to add the Cup to the championship they had taken at Tottenham five nights earlier.

Certainly Wenger and his squad need the breathing space. Dennis Bergkamp, Arsenal's principal conjuror, is already missing the remainder of the league programme with a hamstring injury and is a major doubt for Wembley. For a time last Sunday Arsenal feared they had lost Emmanuel Petit, one half of their inspired Gallic combination in midfield, who was put out of the match by a dreadful tackle from Everton's Don Hutchison at the end of the first half. Gerald Ashby, in his last game, ended with five Everton names in his book.

The Arsenal bench feared the Frenchman had broken a leg. Fortunately X-rays showed no fracture.

Before the end others who had contributed to Arsenal's triumph were able to take their bows. Ian Wright, having not started a match since mid-January, came on for the last 18 minutes. Steve Bould appeared for the last 10.

There was no change to the patterns of passing and movement which had set Arsenal up for the title. During the first half, when game and championship were being won, Petit and Patrick Vieira, both strong in the tackle and quick to break out of defence, again provided the springboard for Arsenal's counter-attacks.

With Overmars dropping deep at set pieces, Everton were at their most vulnerable when they pushed up for free-kicks and only an excellent save by Thomas Myhre denied Arsenal a goal in the opening minute after Christopher Wreh's shot had threatened to round off a brisk counter-attack. Three minutes later Adams rose behind Bilic as Petit's corner swung towards the far post, only for the Croatian's head to do the job for him.

Arsenal had scarcely had time to show any nerves, and the rest was easy. Two minutes before the half-hour, with Petit still on the ground after an encounter with John O'Kane for which the Everton man was booked, Nicolas Anelka released Overmars, whose pace had already destroyed Everton on the left, and the Dutch winger ran half the length of the field before scoring with a shot which the diving Myhre allowed to slip through his arms.

Twelve minutes into the second half, with Highbury already in the throes of noisy celebration, Anelka exploited a mistake by Michael Ball to send Overmars past Dave Watson for Arsenal's third. Adams's late goal was a bonus for the team and a fitting reward for the way he has led the side to another championship. Now the Double beckons.



Title deed . . . Adams holds aloft the Premiership trophy shortly after scoring Arsenal's final goal PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria

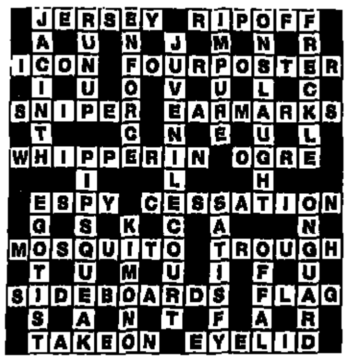
Across

1 Tough guy's writer, our 25's border solution (6)
4 Setter's turn to put on in his time (6)
9 25's in the distance: we return with junior officer, a blade, among trees (1,8,2,4)
10 24 when it came out here made it safe (6)
11 Refuge for model taking time off in a trunk (8)
12 Rearranged pack didn't walk well (8)
14 Change of tense, up and down (6)
15 Sweet, perhaps: 25's death was in the most of it 4 (6)
18 Delays what they do to convicts? (8)
21 Publish an order for Gump role (8)
22 See 18 down
24 25's dissertations about wandering Byelorussian — bye-bye! (3,3,4,5)
25 Sterne's translator was important (6)
26 See 18 down

Down

1 Hot like the thought of the Jabberwock slayer, and touchy (7)
2 Old-fashioned behaviour, — the pity (5)
3 Educational establishment which in Scotland is kept by Eleanor (3,4)
5,16 Original sequel to 25's work, using little of others, referring to . . . (2,5,3,4)
6 . . . passing note from table held off (5-4)
7 Skullcap (shorter version) may return, being left in this country first (7)
8 Note: see where the flowers are, like Keats's peonies (6)
13 Release mother and child on the square (9)
16 See 5
17 English church for American would make this old drunk quiet (7)
18, 22, 26 25's informed about fellow crazy about Granny — fellow and Granny one? (3,3,3,3,3,3)
19 Big beast goes a little way round a flier (7)
20 Herb, an Arsenal player, its leader (7)
23 They are hard — a Pole is sick (5)

Last week's solution



First Division: Stoke City 2 Manchester City 5

City sink into the abyss

Paul Weaver at the Britannia Stadium

IN THE end the emptiness, the futility, the awful meaninglessness of the match, settled on everyone like a dark blanket of depression.

Both these great clubs were in the old Third Division and suddenly this magnificent stadium down Stanley Matthews Way felt as if it had returned to its former life as a grim industrial wasteland.

The goals continued to go in, but they were only half-celebrated; it felt like a testimonial match played at a wake. It was a game that needed mercy-killing and both managers, Joe Royle and Alan Durban, trudged off to the changing-rooms with their substitutes trailing miserably behind long before the final whistle. It was all rather surreal.

It was the most important match some of these footballers will ever play, yet they could not raise a gallop in the final quarter. Port Vale, Portsmouth and Bury had all won away from home and the desperate consequences of those results meant both these clubs were relegated.

Manchester City, who finished third bottom on 48 points, were one point from safety; Stoke were two points further back. The terrible torpor on the terraces spread on to the pitch. It stopped the flow of adrenalin; fatigue, mental and physical, took over.

These clubs had come to Stoke to bury each other but they ended face down in the dirt together like two last-reel gunslingers, although in this particular epic both proved equally slow on the draw.

It is the lowest Manchester City have been in their 111-year history. They are paying for the mess of 11 managers in 12 years. Stoke cannot even find a manager. They are down to the old Third Division for the second time in seven years.

Their caretaker manager, Durban, said: "My spell as manager is over. We just didn't get going. It was a bizarre match. We had already hit the iceberg when I arrived and I was delighted to get another chance to get out of trouble."

Royle, Manchester City's manager, said: "We have scored five goals away from home for the first time this season and gone down. Now there is going to be some soul-searching, and big decisions will be taken within the next seven days.

"The chairman has already made contingency plans and there will be an announcement soon. The players know they have let the fans down. But every time we have made a mistake we have been punished for it."

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Week ending May 17, 1998

She is three and suffers from a plague that kills millions – the plague of debt

Maggie O'Kane begins a campaign on debt relief with a report from Niger, which spends three times more on repayments than on health and schools

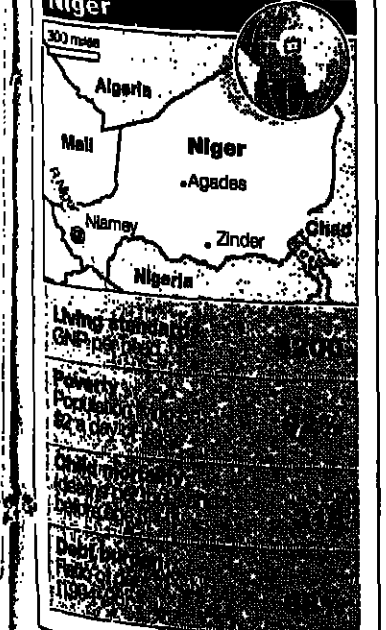
THEY are sitting in a corner of the hospital, shaded by their compound wall. She is three years old, with dark, dusty ringlets and a buttercup yellow dress with faded pink tulips. They are on a wicker mat, apart from the others, him rubbing her shoulders and smoothing her hair.

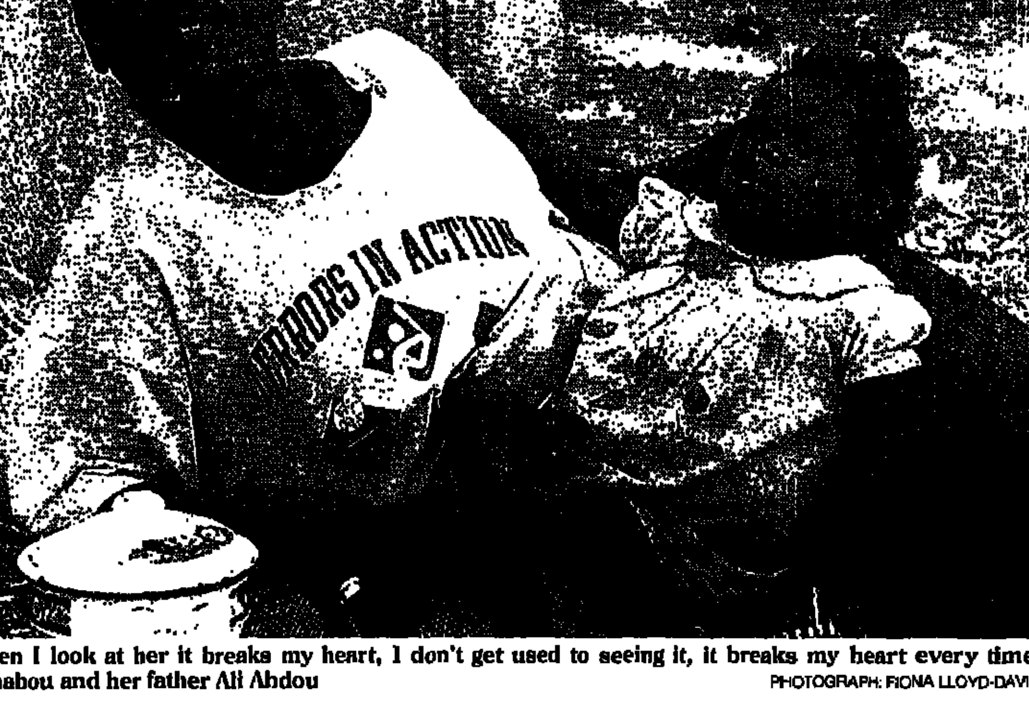
The sieve-maker's daughter, Zeinabou, has half a face, the rest has been eaten. She has been visited by the sickness the ancient Greeks named the Grazer, for it grazes steadily through the muscles, the tissue and the bones. It came first as a small black spot six months ago. Her father, Ali Abdou, thought it was an abscess and treated it with the leaves of the lemon tree. He had never heard of the Grazer or its African name, Noma. The Grazer was last seen in Europe when it visited the children in the Nazi concentration camps.

In Niger there is no war, famine or pestilence, but the Grazer is kept supplied with children by the starvation diets and a collapsing health system caused by the pressure of international debt.

In Niger, the poorest country in the world, three times more money is spent paying off the international debt than on health and education. The country has no choice. No repayments means no more loans, means total collapse.

Ali Abdou doesn't know much about the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. He doesn't know many things: how to read, his age, why his other daughter, Della, died of measles when she was two years old, why the common germs everyone has in their mouth turned so cruel with his daughter. A child so weakened by a starvation diet of corn and poverty that her body had nothing to fight the Grazer.





'When I look at her it breaks my heart, I don't get used to seeing it, it breaks my heart every time.' Zeinabou and her father Ali Abdou PHOTOGRAPH: FIONA LLOYD-DAVIES

He had to make 150 sieves before he had the money to take her to hospital. When they finally got to the regional hospital at Galmi they waited for 20 days to see a doctor. The pressure of debt repayments means that the public purse is empty. Salaries have not been paid for three months, the hospitals have no wages to pay their doctors and nurses, so Zeinabou waited while the Grazer worked on her face.

In the beginning all she needed was antiseptic cream and a mouthwash. But without them the Grazer ate through her young face; first her lips and gums, then tugging her eye out of shape, sucking on the edge of her pupils, threatening to steal her sight. One day the rotting flesh fell away, leaving her baby teeth and her pink, healthy tongue exposed. The Grazer likes children around two years old: gentler skin, softer layers of tissue, easier to settle in. It's carried by ordinary bacteria in ordinary mouths and could be kept at bay by the sort of medicines a child in the West is given for a cold.

But in Niger, where one in three children dies from long-term starvation diets before the age of five, nothing is ordinary. In villages where there is no money to invest in seeds and fertiliser they live on maize; where there is no local clinic and fathers don't have the small change it takes to get their only daughter on a bus to hospital.

"When I look at her it breaks my heart, I don't forget it, don't get used to seeing it, it breaks my heart every time," Ali Abdou says.

The temperature in their special isolation compound is more than 40C, and the other children with no faces lie sleeping in the shade with the blast of wind gusting like the heat of an oven across the concrete.

"When I sell my sieves I buy maize, about a bowl a day. That's what my family eat. I had five children — one's dead. I don't have money for other kinds of food. I feel terrible because she is the only one in our village who has it, and people won't say to me that they are afraid of catching it from her, but I know they are. But I didn't go to the market and buy it — God sent it. In our village she is apart from the other children. Not that they beat her or do say anything to her, but she seems like she chooses to be apart for herself," Zeinabou's father says.

Every year in the world's poorest countries the World Health Organisation estimates that 80,000 children die because there is no antiseptic cream and mouthwash to fight the Grazer.

Just under half a million children are scheduled to die in Niger before 2000, according to Oxfam assessments that are based on financial repayments to the IMF and the state of Niger's finances for investment in health care and prevention. Given the size of the population, that's the equivalent of 3 million children dying in Britain from curable diseases.

Half of them will first be prepared for death by a starvation diet that will break down their body's immune system before they are killed by measles, malaria, meningitis and diarrhoea. The hungriest and weakest are those most favoured by the Grazer, which goes only for the face.

Ali Abdou and his daughter Zeinabou have been in the compound for 28 days. It has been two years since a German schoolteacher visited Niger and began a campaign to help the children. They have brought 250 children out of their villages for treatment. "This is the face of International Debt in Niger," says Leo Sibomana, the co-ordinator of the project.

In Niger the 13 children in this compound were found by a German aid organisation which organises trips to find children hidden by parents who are ashamed of the ugliness of the disease.

"We have no idea how many of these children there are because they are hidden. I've lived in Niger all my life and never heard of the Noma children. There are doctors and nurses in this hospital who don't know what it is. Eighty to 90 per cent of them starve to death fairly quickly within a year because the muscles in their jaw are eaten away, and they can't eat, so they just disappear," says Sibomana. "In one

continued on page 5

Finance, page 14

India nuclear test provokes world's anger

Ian Black in London and M K Narayan in New Delhi

INDIA stunned the world — and its Asian neighbours in particular — by conducting its first nuclear test for 24 years, coming out of the closet this week to declare that it now has the capacity to produce weapons.

In a move that came as a blow both to regional stability and international efforts to promote non-proliferation, the government in New Delhi said its underground blasts established that it had "proven capability" for a weapons programme.

The secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said the tests broke an international understanding, and he called for "maximum restraint" from countries in the region. "For quite some time there has been a de facto moratorium on nuclear testing," he said.

But even as India held out the prospect that it would now work for disarmament, there were fears that its action would trigger testing by its fellow nuclear "threshold" state Pakistan and by China, which with the world's four other "official" nuclear powers has signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

India's action drew a formal protest from the United States and "dismay" from the European Union. Both will want to explore the prospects for dissuading India from conducting further tests. New Zealand and Australia both withdrew their high commissioners in protest.

India, Pakistan and Israel were widely suspected of

continued on page 3

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Politics speaks loudly in the euro market

IT IS in both the letter and the spirit of the Maastricht treaty that the president of the European Central Bank should be a political appointee chosen by the heads of state and/or government of the participant countries (Editorial, May 10). Why be surprised, then, that a political appointment or two should have been the result of the discussions?

Of course, it would be preferable if the ECB were a politically accountable body with the ambition of reducing unemployment. This would only be possible if the political structures of Europe were strengthened at the cost of a loss of political sovereignty for individual states. Such a policy is not currently on the European agenda, but it is certainly the goal sought by pro-European left wingers.

Their cause has been much helped by the unfortunate President Chirac who, far from being a bully-boy, is the unwitting hero of the left: the more friction he and others like him cause at summits, the clearer the need for political integration becomes.

Etienne Brun-Rovet,
Balliol College, Oxford

OUT OF complacency comes incompetence. This seems to be the narrative emerging from the lazy approach of the British government to negotiations in Europe (Squabbling politicians spoil the euro's birth, May 10).

At Amsterdam, important powers, such as majority voting in foreign policy and wide-ranging jurisdiction for the European Court of Justice in criminal policy, were thoughtlessly conceded. Little was said of this. Instead, being "on-message" included trumpeting an opt-out "safeguarding" British frontier controls, noteworthy only for its meaninglessness beyond the world of tabloid headlines, given the existence of the Anglo-Irish common travel area.

At Brussels last week, one would have thought it the duty of the British presidency of the European Union, amply forewarned, to come up with an agreement in due time that was clearly both legal and credible on the global capital markets. Instead, being "on-message" meant blaming the UK government's failure on the French and Germans. Odd, really, as I understood one of the main protagonists to be Dutch.

Damian Chalmers,
Lecturer in EU Law, London School of Economics, London

YOUR editorial confuses matters when you argue that "the UK will have to maintain a borrowing requirement much less than the Maastricht ceiling (3 per cent of GDP) in order to have the flexibility to cut taxes or increase spending . . ." But the 3 per cent ceiling is a government deficit ceiling, and it is perfectly possible to have a high tax/high spend 3 per cent ceiling or a low tax/low spend 3 per cent ceiling under the Maastricht criteria. To imply otherwise gives encouragement to the Tory Eurosceptics who falsely claim that the single currency will inevitably mean not being able to make our own tax and spend decisions.

The decision to establish the single currency based on 11 countries is a huge step forward for Europe. It can tackle speculation, and lead to lower interest rates, higher investment and higher growth. We must now open up the single currency debate, as the government is doing, to make an informed decision about Britain's participation.

Bill Rammell MP
Member of European Legislation Select Committee,
House of Commons, London

Have a heart for Russia's youth

JAMES MEEK only reveals the "darker" tendencies of Russian society, especially when describing the new generation (Young Russia takes to cash economy, March 22). The facts given by Meek cannot be denied. But the new generation are not just cola-drinking, gum-chewing, materialistic, heartless monsters. Being a representative of this generation, I can tell you that most of my friends are not preparing themselves to become mafia bosses or to get money illegally. Many of them are hard-working, intelligent people who understand that it is good to earn their living, but who do not put money first on their list of priorities.

The recent tendency among young people is to get money in order to feel confident and comfortable, and to spend it on enriching their personality. The answers given in the survey are mostly influenced by the current economic situation, and I am sure that these will be completely different when time passes and the environment changes.

Sergei Tsypin,
Moscow, Russia

JOURNALISTS seem to prefer extremes when dealing with Russian youth. They tend to write either about "the lost generation" or about "money-obsessed monsters". The fact is, young Russians should not be viewed as a homogeneous class. According to the survey by the Russian Institute of Youth, every person surveyed considers a job as the most important precondition for high self-esteem. At the same time, he/she aspires to higher education in order to gain a higher position in the job hierarchy. Searching through the article, I did not find one word on the important issue of education.

"They are young, they are beautiful and full of hope," Meek says. But according to the same survey, every third person aged between 14 and 29 is unemployed.

Irina Dubovskaya,
Moscow, Russia

JAMES MEEK introduces the fact that a considerable number of young Russians place money as the first priority in their lives as if it were something unheard of before. Isn't a preoccupation with money one of the characteristic of Western societies, where it has become a perfectly natural feature?

As far as other problems are concerned, did they not become topical issues with the introduction of the market economy? I am not defending the old Soviet regime. But Meek terrifies the readers by pointing out the tendencies emerging in Russian society among the young, while actually touching upon similar dilemmas in his own world.

He is almost saying: "Look, they have caught the same disease that we had years ago!" And that doesn't sound too cheerful — for either party.

Elena Ilicheva,
Moscow, Russia

French look out for themselves

THE Multinational Investment Agreement stems from a European Commission initiative at the World Trade Organisation (Rich man's club makes poor offer, May 3). In May 1995 discussion was transferred to a closed, French-chaired committee, meeting in the Paris office of the (largely) French-staffed Organisation of European Co-operation and Development (OECD) — with the knowledge and approval, evidently, of the French political establishment. This blocked the participation of "difficult" WTO members, such as India.

In February 1997 a draft agreement was leaked to Global Trade Watch, an environmental and pro-Third World organisation in Canada. They and Ralph Nader's United States-based Public Citizen Organisation conducted a campaign of public information and debate, and their petition against MAI was supported by NGOs worldwide. In March the evidence of public opposition mobilised by this campaign was presented to a Congressional Foreign Affairs Committee by Lori Wallach.

The MAI was then dead in the water. There was not, as far as I noticed, any significant French participation in this worldwide movement of opposition, and I cannot recall any mention of the subject in the French press until recently, when a handful of film directors called a press conference demanding that the French government not sign any agreement that might damage the (subsidised) French film industry. Was this what your correspondent Mark Atkinson had in mind when he announced that "France has been spearheading resistance to the MAI"?

John Roberts,
Labastide-Paumes, France

Taking on the gene machine

MONSANTO is about to spend a great deal of money to educate us on the "virtues" of genetically modified (GM) soya beans. This is unlikely to dispel our unease concerning the commercialisation of GM crops and the food industry's failure to provide consumers with choice.

Growers in the United States have insisted on mixing the new crop with conventional soya so that it loses its identity in the food chain. This precedent will not be lost on growers of other GM crops, such as maize, oilseed rape, sugar beet and potatoes. European governments have failed to insist on full labelling of GM ingredients in food, and proposals being considered by the European Commission are full of loopholes.

The long-term effects on human health and the environment are not known. We believe that consumers rather than biotechnology companies should decide whether they eat GM ingredients in processed foods. We call on the biotechnology industry and the UK government to insist on segregating GM crops at source and fully labelling all ingredients.

Sheila McKechnie,
Consumers' Association,
Ruth Evans,
National Consumer Council,
Stephan Crampton,
Consumers in Europe,
Jim Murray,
European Consumers' Union,
London

Briefly

I CONTEST William Booth's assumptions that the United States is or was a "melting pot" that promised all immigrants the possibility of becoming Americans, while at the same time encouraging them (by tradition) to pay homage to their immigrant roots (New wave of immigrants tests a dream, April 12). As I see it, immigrants only became Americans by pulling up and throwing away those roots — the sooner the better.

Moreover, the "greater consensus in the past" about what it meant to be an American, that some historians insist upon, ignores the indisputable fact that entire segments of the population were systematically excluded from becoming Americans: blacks, Latinos and Asians — the very groups who, Booth sniffs disapprovingly, now have the effrontery to sit at their own table in law school. No, the melting pot only reduced those who could become "white"; all others were considered indissoluble and unpalatable and were thrown off the stove.

Allan Lönnberg,
Aptos, California, USA

TIM RADFORD'S account of the Scottish work on genetic susceptibility and resistance to lung cancer is most intriguing (May 3). If the pertinent genotypes are now known, would not the first step be to make analysis available to smokers who might find their predisposition (or lack of it), a salient guideline to appropriate conduct on this score? More relevant here and now perhaps, than any programme of gene manipulation over the next 10 years

Michael Rose,
Tugun, Queensland, Australia

CONCERNING your article "Belgians unite against separatism" (April 5), I would like to point out that Brussels is not in the Flemish Region but under Article 3 of the constitution it is one of the three regions that make up the country, although geographically it is a kind of enclave in the Flemish Region.

Maurice Herion,
Buzet, Belgium

MARTIN KETTLE comments on Americans' reluctance to pay their taxes (April 19). This is reflected in the US government's attitude to the UN. Or is it vice versa?

Richard Glover,
Auckland, New Zealand

IS IT true that a poster on a Birmingham bus shelter bears the legend: "Take your dentures out, Marge. Bill Clinton is coming to town" (May 10)?

Steve Elliot,
London

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Indonesia revolt turns to violence

Andrew Higgins in Medan

PROMINENT critics of President Suharto of Indonesia accused him this week of corruption and abuse of power and echoed student demands for an end to his 32-year rule.

After months of student-led protest across the country, turmoil in the city of Medan, in northern Sumatra, gave force to a growing chorus of voices warning Mr Suharto to open up the sclerotic political system or reap a whirlwind of chaos.

Amien Rais, the leader of Indonesia's second-largest Muslim organisation, declared support for the protests and told thousands of cheering supporters that Mr Suharto led "the most corrupt regime in the universe".

He said the students were voicing the frustration of Indonesia's middle class and workers with the president's rule and with an economic crisis that led to riots last week when fuel prices rose sharply. He urged the army, the bedrock of Mr Suharto's power base, to desert their leader.

Thousands of supporters of Mr Rais's moderate Muhammadiyah organisation, which boasts 28 million members, cheered his calls for the president to quit.

A group of retired generals and politicians urged the assembly that named Mr Suharto to a seventh five-year term in March to revoke the appointment. Gen Ali Sadikin said that the government had for too long used "state money for personal interests" and abused its power.

Indonesia's 10 million Protestants joined the Muhammadiyah and scores of other groups in demanding immediate political and economic reform. Even the military has embraced at least the rhetoric of change.

In Medan nearly a week of violence left dozens of buildings gutted, up to a dozen people dead and thousands of troops encamped in and around this city of nearly 2 million. The convulsion was calmed by volleys of tear gas and rubber bullets.

The fall of Mr Suharto's predecessor, President Sukarno, was accompanied by an orgy of blood-letting against alleged communists. Half a million people, many of them ethnic Chinese, perished. Once again pressure for change is growing. So are the dangers.

The mayhem in Medan has made a mockery of stage-managed shows of popular support for the 76-year-old president, which climaxed in March when a handpicked assembly, claiming to represent the country's 200 million people, "re-elected" him for a seventh five-year term.

But the violence has also unnerved activists in the vanguard of protest. Campus leaders are struggling to understand how their youthful and idealistic crusade against Indonesia's old order turned into a riot of looting and violence against ethnic Chinese.

"This has been a bad week for us — anarchy, riots and burning shops. This is not the peaceful movement we want," said Rosmery, a political science lecturer at the University of North Sumatra and leader of an informal caucus of protest organisers.

"What we want is 'people power', not violence. All people must join hands together."

Unlike the Philippines, where "people power" ousted Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 with little bloodshed, Indonesia's challenge to President Suharto is proving perilous.

Anti-Chinese sentiment has been a constant of Indonesian life since the Dutch colonial period. The economic woes have now inflamed such passions to fever pitch.

In Medan campus leaders sought to refocus the anger. Students deny involvement in the riots and accuse the government of using, and even fomenting, the unrest to discredit their cause. The trigger for the worst looting followed an abrupt announcement by the government that it would increase fuel prices, a move that will sharply raise the cost of cooking and public transport.

The International Monetary Fund had ordered that subsidies on fuel and other goods be phased out in return for a $43 billion rescue package. The suddenness of the government's decision, however, seems to have surprised even the IMF's fervent free-marketeers, especially as Mr Suharto has been so slow to embrace IMF-mandated measures that threaten his family.

Philippines matinée idol poised for presidency

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Manila

THE Philippines is preparing for a "Ronald Reagan era" as early results from elections on Monday pointed towards a handsome victory for the former matinée idol turned populist presidential candidate, Joseph Estrada.

Voting had barely finished before Mr Estrada was claiming "a victory for the masses for the first time", and talking about early steps he will take after assuming the presidency. "This will be the last and greatest performance of my life," said Mr Estrada, whose mass appeal is founded on his tough-guy action film roles.

An informal exit poll by a Manila radio station showed him likely to take 36 per cent of the vote, to 18 per cent for the candidate of the outgoing administration, José de Venecia. The exit polls are too new and untried to be judged reliable, but partial results also showed Mr Estrada, aged 61, who had been vice-president, pulling easily clear of all 10 other would-be leaders.

Ronaldo Zamora, a member of the inner circle and tipped for a key job under an Estrada presidency, said: "From the reports we are getting it will be a massive landslide."

Voters turned out in large numbers for what was one of the most peaceful elections of recent years. The death toll of 39 was relatively low by Philippines standards.

Election officials suspended the poll in some 20 towns of the troubled southern island of Mindanao, but voting elsewhere was relatively orderly. "No guns like before, only hand phones and cameras", chuckled Candida, an official monitor at one polling station in the capital.

The prospect of an Estrada presidency was once widely treated as a joke. A college drop-out, the actor has been scorned by the Philippines élite for his supposedly faulty English and shunned by the powerful Roman Catholic Church for his philandering and gambling.

Now some measure of acceptance, even enthusiasm, is coming from local political analysts and academics. "He's more honest than Clinton, holds his liquor better than Yeltsin and is less corrupt than [Indonesian President] Suharto," a university teacher, Randy David, remarked hopefully.

On assuming office at the end of June, Mr Estrada says he plans to move fast to ease poverty and to crack down on government corruption. He intends to keep for himself the interior portfolio, with its crime-busting responsibilities.

To ease the fears of business, which was mostly hostile to his candidacy, Mr Estrada emphasises his commitment to open market policies. But agrarian and land reform also come high on an agenda in which he says his "first concern" will be to ease poverty.



Children in Manila toss sample ballot papers in the air after the close of voting last Sunday PHOTOGRAPH: DOUGLAS CAMPOS

India nuclear test row

Continued from page 1

nuclear capability and have not joined the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of 1970, which is observed by 185 countries.

On Tuesday the Pakistani prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, said that his government's response to India's nuclear tests would not be dictated by foreign powers. "Pakistan has the right to take any steps which are essential for Pakistan's security. This is our job and we alone have to decide about it," he said.

The foreign minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, said: "Pakistan strongly condemns this Indian act and the entire world should condemn it. Pakistan's defence will be made impregnable against any Indian threat, be it nuclear or conventional."

More explicitly, a former Pakistani intelligence chief, retired general Hamid Gul, said that Pakistan should immediately demonstrate its own nuclear capability.

India's three blasts were conducted in Pokhran, an uninhabited area east of the city of Jaisalmer and about 100km south of the border with Pakistan. Pokhran was the site of India's only previous test on May 18, 1974.

In a brief statement the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said scientists had tested a fission device, a low-yield device and a thermonuclear device.

The White House press secretary, Mike McCurry, said President Clinton was "deeply distressed" by the tests and that a formal US protest would be filed. The state department spokesman, James Rubin, called the tests a "very, very negative development" and said senior US officials were considering action, including sanctions, and whether Mr Clinton's planned visit later this year would go ahead.

Japan, India's biggest aid donor, said it was considering a freeze on loans and other economic sanctions against New Delhi because of its surprise nuclear tests.

India's Hindu nationalist government received the unexpected backing of even its most strident critics at home. The main opposition Congress party said in a statement that it congratulated Indian scientists "for this successful scientific experiment, which demonstrates India's technological advance". It added: "This is the logical culmination of a process initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1974."

P K Iyengau, a former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, said India should now be regarded on a level with the world's five leading nuclear states. "If India is accepted politically as a nuclear weapon state, then it could act much more responsibly in the nuclear disarmament issue."

The New Delhi government later said that the tests showed India "has a proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme".

Comment, page 12

The Week

RWANDA's president Pasteur Bizimungu boycotted a dinner to honour the visiting United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, accusing him of arrogance and insensitivity after Mr Annan had spoken of the need for "life even after genocide".

THE ruling Hungarian Socialist party of the prime minister, Gyula Horn, took the lead in the first round of the Hungarian general election, but could still be overtaken by its main rival, Fidesz, in the second round in two weeks' time.

ISRAEL'S prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, ignored a US ultimatum to attend a peace summit in Washington and resume negotiations with Yasser Arafat.

Washington Diary, page 6
Washington Post, page 17

AUTHORITIES in Beijing have released a jailed Roman Catholic bishop, Zeng Jingmu, aged 78, in an attempt to ease human rights criticism ahead of President Bill Clinton's visit to China next month.

THE US attorney-general, Janet Reno, asked an independent counsel to investigate whether the labour secretary, Alexis Herman, tried to sell her influence or solicited illegal campaign contributions while she was a White House aide.

GAY and lesbian activists in South Africa celebrated a court ruling that apartheid-era laws prohibiting homosexual acts were unconstitutional.

NINETEEN Mexican firemen fighting a forest blaze in the northern hills of Puebla were burned to death when the winds unexpectedly changed direction.

PATRIZIA, the estranged wife of Maurizio Gucci — heir to the Italian fashion empire who was shot dead three years ago — has gone on trial in Milan accused of commissioning his murder.

THE former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, on a trip abroad, said she would return to her homeland to face warrants issued for her arrest.

A BOY of five was arrested in Memphis, Tennessee, for bringing a loaded pistol to school because he wanted to kill his teacher for giving him detention.

THE French book world is in uproar at what it says is an unprecedented attack on freedom of information after two exceptionally severe court judgments against investigative works.

THE former prime minster of Thailand, Chatichai Choonhavan, has died aged 76.

Kosovo fighters set no-go areas

Jonathan Steele in Pristina

IT WAS the 30th protest march by Kosovo Albanians in as many days, but this time the daily ritual along Pristina's main street sounded markedly different. "We are the Kosovo Liberation Army," shouted a group of young people at the head of the column. In their hands they carried a banner with the armed movement's initials.

Tentatively at first, then with enthusiasm, the crowd took up the defiant cry: "We are the KLA." Middle-aged people joined in as the shout echoed from the walls of apartment blocks along the route.

"It's the first time they have ever come out for the KLA," said a local journalist who from the beginning has covered the marches in which the ethnic Albanian majority in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo is demanding autonomy from Belgrade.

The new defiance — in full view of the plainclothes Serbian police who monitor the daily parades — came as gunmen from the KLA exchanged fire with uniformed Serbian forces barely 50km from Pristina, on the main road between the capital and the province's other main city, Pec.

At least six Serbian policemen were wounded in separate attacks, and traffic along the road has been blocked for three days in a dramatic sign of the KLA's ability to disrupt Serbian control of the province.

The surge in the KLA's strength in only two months has begun to change the map of Kosovo politics, forcing the civilian parties into agonising debates over whether to support the guerrillas. A movement that numbered only a few score armed men in March can count on 12,000 today, according to well informed Albanian sources in Pristina.

The Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, continues to reject outside mediation in the Kosovo conflict, despite new sanctions that include a ban on investment announced last Saturday by the US, Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

Richard Holbrooke, Washington's best known Balkan troubleshooter, failed to change Mr Milosevic's mind in more than four hours of talks in Belgrade. "Violence is spreading like wildfire and we're concerned," the US envoy said.

On the backroads of Kosovo where the KLA has no-go areas that the Serbs dare not enter, all the signs are that a full insurgency is already under way. Instead of two or three armed men, one comes across units of a dozen or more. Besides Kalashnikov rifles, they have rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine-guns on tripods, and networks of fresh trenches.

"The KLA used to operate in groups of three to five fighters, with one or two novices in each action who were taken along to gain combat experience," said one Albanian analyst. Group commanders were believed to remain in Kosovo for up to three actions, he said, and then withdrew "to western Europe".

He put the total number of KLA gunmen at no more than 150 in March. Arms were kept in caches and taken to a pre-arranged spot, where they were picked up by a squad planning a hit-and-run attack on a remote police station or a passing police vehicle.

A huge flow of volunteers in the villages has changed this. They see themselves as partisans defending their territory and preventing the kind of Serbian onslaughts that took place on two settlements in March, when more than 80 people, including women and children, were killed. Kosovo Albanians in western Europe have also rushed back to join the KLA. Recruiting is under way in Kosovan cities.

The analyst estimates the KLA can now call on 12,000 men. The inrush of volunteers has led to the need to train them in Kosovo rather than abroad: "There are three or four training camps in Kosovo, staffed partly by advisers from Chechenia and Turkey."

No one in the KLA's leadership has yet come forward to identify himself or explain the command structure. The backbone is thought to consist of former officers in the Yugoslav interior ministry police. They were sacked in 1989, like most Albanians in state jobs.

The Serbs still have a massive and better armed force. The Yugoslav army and Serbian police number 140,000, with some 20,000 of them deployed in Kosovo.

Washington Post, page 18



Cars are swept through the streets of Sarno, in southern Italy, by a torrent of mud last week. At least 135 people were killed. At a mass funeral last Sunday grief turned to anger as residents blamed local officials and the central government for not alerting them in time about the danger PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

Ruling party wins Paraguay elections

Stephen Brown in Asuncion

PARAGUAY'S ruling Colorado party on Monday celebrated its triumph in a presidential election, and Raul Cubas, the country's next leader, called the opposition bad losers for alleging fraud.

"This result shows that the country belongs to the Colorado party and that there are people outside the party who trust the party too," Mr Cubas said before being received by the outgoing Colorado president, Juan Carlos Wasmosy.

Mr Cubas, who will be Paraguay's second civilian president in 50 years, said the Democratic Alliance candidate, Domingo Laino, who has alleged he was cheated, "cannot digest reality".

Partial results from the High Electoral Court, with more than 60 per cent of last Sunday's votes counted, gave Mr Cubas 54 per cent of the vote and an 11-point lead over Mr Laino, meaning that the Colorados will keep their 51-year grip on power.

It was the third general election since Paraguay emerged from the 35-year dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner, also a Colorado, after a palace coup in 1989.

Mr Cubas, aged 54, was the last-minute replacement for army strongman Lino Oviedo, whose Colorado candidacy was cut short just two weeks before the vote, when the Supreme Court confirmed his 10-year prison sentence for an attempted coup in 1996.

Mr Laino, aged 62, who was exiled by Gen Stroessner, led a coalition of Liberals and Social Democrats in his third bid for power. He says he was robbed of victory in 1993 by fraud.

About 2 million voters cast ballots in the election, which sets in motion the first peaceful transition from one civilian president to another in decades.

Election officials delayed releasing preliminary results for a day to check reports of irregularities in results faxed to the election tribunal. Mr Laino had called for an investigation, saying exit polls by his campaign showed him to be the winner. But he conceded on Monday, saying he had received "confusing information".

He said the re-election of the Colorado party was "going to create difficulties for achieving real stability" in Paraguay's fledgling democracy. He noted infighting between Mr Cubas and others in the party and said its programme offered nothing new for a nation where corruption and poverty are endemic.

Mr Laino was detained repeatedly for resisting Gen Stroessner's dictatorship, one of the longest running in Latin America.

Foreign observers led by the Organisation of American States said the election was the cleanest in Paraguay's brief democratic history.

Paraguay wanted a clean election to help shed its image as one of Latin America's most dysfunctional democracies, rife with corruption, smuggling and money-laundering, and overshadowed by military strongmen.

Mr Cubas's first act after his victory speech was to visit Gen Oviedo in his cell at an Asuncion army barracks. The general was elected candidate in primaries last September to the fury of Mr Wasmosy, who ordered him to undergo a military trial for refusing to quit his command in 1996. Gen Oviedo campaigned from behind bars and was ahead in polls until the Supreme Court's ruling forced him to yield to Mr Cubas.

Mr Cubas denounced the military tribunal as unconstitutional and promised to free Gen Oviedo after taking power in August. — *Reuters*

Fuel blast fears ground older 737s

Vikram Dodd

AT LEAST 10 Boeing 737s operated by British airlines were grounded for emergency safety checks last Sunday following a directive from the United States Federal Aviation Administration.

Inspections in the US have revealed extensive wear in power lines running through the fuel tanks of some older 737s, raising fears of an explosion.

The FAA order, adopted by Britain's Civil Aviation Authority, requires older 737-100 and 737-200 versions that have flown for more than 50,000 hours to undergo immediate checks on the electricity lines, which power fuel pumps. More than 300 jets around the world are affected.

The FAA move follows mounting concern over the safety of fuel tanks since an explosion downed TWA flight 800 off Long Island in 1996. The Paris-bound 747 was blown apart by a fuel tank blast. Investigators are not sure what caused the explosion.

The FAA announcement prohibited the flying of affected 737s before any necessary repairs have been made and gave airlines 14 days to check 737s with 40,000-50,000 hours' flying time.

The airline industry fears that the FAA could extend its immediate inspection order to 737s with less than 40,000 hours' flying time, causing airport chaos. The 737 is the world's best-selling aeroplane with 2,716 registered worldwide.

Russ Young, a Boeing spokesman, said: "We strongly support the FAA's decision. We think it is in everyone's best interest to make absolutely sure there are no problems that could compromise safety."

The company would work with the FAA and affected airlines in "taking any action that is appropriate and necessary", he added.

Rich Breuhaus, Boeing's chief engineer for fuel system safety, has admitted that there are concerns that fuel could be ignited if Teflon-coated wires inside a punctured conduit were to arc.

In one aircraft there were pinholes in an aluminium conduit, which Boeing officials say may have been caused by arcing of the wires.

S Africa rugby chief resigns

John Perlman in Johannesburg

THE resignation last Sunday of the president of the South African Rugby Football Union (Sarfu), Louis Luyt, has been greeted with a mixture of jubilation and relief.

At a Sarfu executive meeting last week, its four black members resigned over a dispute centred on claims of continued racism and mismanagement.

The sports minister, Steve Tshwete, said of Mr Luyt's exit: "This is the best thing that has happened to South African rugby since winning the World Cup."

Mluleki George, the president of South Africa's National Sports Council which has been leading the fight against Luyt, said letters to the Irish and Welsh rugby unions asking them to postpone their forthcoming visits would be held back.

Luyt, who last week defied a call by a majority within Sarfu for his resignation, said he was stepping down because "my people folded and I can't trust them any more".

Mr Luyt, who would in any event have faced a no-confidence vote in two weeks, said he was "not prepared to do something that will damage rugby".

Much damage has already been done, however. Mvuso Mbebe, the chief executive of the NSC, said it would still be pushing for the rest of the Sarfu executive to resign, branding those who had backed Mr Luyt as "arrogant and reactionary".

It is likely that South African rugby will be put under some kind of interim management this week, chaired possibly by the manager of the World Cup-winning team, Morne du Plessis.

Bishop's suicide inflames tensions in Pakistan

Richard Galpin in Islamabad

AN ARMED mob of up to 500 Muslim extremists attacked Christian homes and businesses in the Pakistani city of Faisalabad last Sunday as a Roman Catholic bishop, who shot himself in protest at discrimination against the minority Christian community, was buried in the city's cathedral.

The mob burned and looted houses and shops. Witnesses said the extremists ripped up bibles and tore down pictures of Jesus. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd.

The attack came as thousands of mourners came to Faisalabad for the funeral of Bishop John Joseph following an earlier service in his village of Khushpur. He shot himself through the head last week outside a court that sentenced a young Christian man to death for alleged blasphemy against Islam. The bishop was a leading campaigner against the blasphemy laws, which he said were used to persecute the Christian minority. Muslims make up 97 per cent of the population.

There is a mandatory death sentence for anyone found to have uttered statements deemed harmful to Islam. Human rights groups say there are hundreds of cases pending against members of the religious minorities. They say few are brought on genuine grounds — most are the result of personal vendettas. Although convictions have been overturned on appeal, several Christians and defence lawyers have been attacked by Muslim extremists.

"Bishop Joseph gave his life to show that injustice is being done to our community here, and that injustice is continuing," Father Pervais Emmanuel told the mourners.

In a letter to a national newspaper Joseph wrote that Christians and Muslims should work together to have the laws repealed, without worrying about the sacrifices. "Dedicated people do not count the cost," he wrote.

The blasphemy conviction of Ayub Masih last month seems to have convinced Joseph to take drastic action. Last week he walked up to the court in Sahiwal, which had sentenced Masih to death, and shot himself in the head.

"This was really a gesture of absolute desperation," said Asma Jahangir, the head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "The time has come when people are taking desperate measures because of this blasphemy law. People are living in constant fear that they will be trapped by it — because once you come under it, there's no way of getting out."

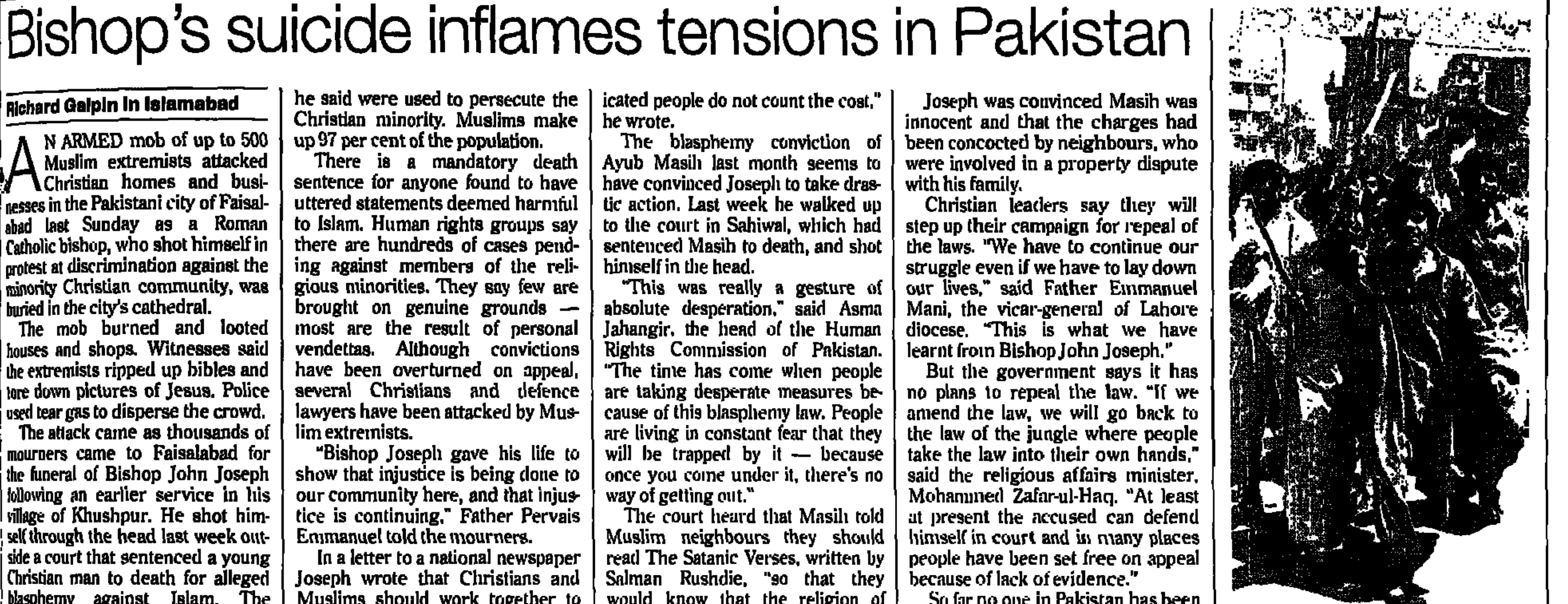
The court heard that Masih told Muslim neighbours they should read The Satanic Verses, written by Salman Rushdie, "so that they would know that the religion of their Holy Prophet was false". Masih denied the charges.

Joseph was convinced Masih was innocent and that the charges had been concocted by neighbours, who were involved in a property dispute with his family.

Christian leaders say they will step up their campaign for repeal of the laws. "We have to continue our struggle even if we have to lay down our lives," said Father Emmanuel Mani, the vicar-general of Lahore diocese. "This is what we have learnt from Bishop John Joseph."

But the government says it has no plans to repeal the law. "If we amend the law, we will go back to the law of the jungle where people take the law into their own hands," said the religious affairs minister, Mohammed Zafar-ul-Haq. "At least at present the accused can defend himself in court and in many places people have been set free on appeal because of lack of evidence."

So far no one in Pakistan has been executed for blasphemy. Masih is preparing to appeal for his life.



Muslims march towards the Catholic cathedral in Faisalabad

Medics urged to put patients before profits

Paul Brown

PATENTING life forms is to be declared unethical by the World Medical Association (WMA) because it is aimed at maximising profit rather than making treatment available to patients.

The organisation, which represents doctors and scientists in 77 countries, says that no doctor should take part in patenting lifeforms and medical processes.

The organisation contacted the Guardian last week following the disclosure that a United States company was trying to patent the complete gene sequence of a meningitis bacterium, which would mean that anyone developing a vaccine would have to pay a royalty to the company.

The WMA proposal says: "Physicians have an ethical obligation not to permit profit motives to influence their free and independent medical judgment."

The organisation also says that doctors have ethical obligations both to teach skills and techniques to their colleagues and continuously learn and update their own skills. Patents can undermine these obligations by limiting the dissemination of knowledge.

Some 80 countries have already banned the registering of such patents, but the US and Europe have not. The American Medical Association is instrumental in proposing a worldwide ban on such patents for members.

It says there is no reason to believe that those holding these patents would make the information widely available. "The point of obtaining a patent is to maximise one's profit. In the case of patented medical procedures, this may be done by making the procedure widely available through non-exclusive, low licence fees, or by limiting availability and charging higher prices to people who cannot afford to do without the procedure."

Niger's plague of debt

Continued from page 1

village we found a 25-year-old woman who was a Noma and had survived, but she had lived alone in her hut for more than 20 years because of her face."

The centre has been open for five months. First it feeds the children out of their malnutrition, treats the spreading disease and twice a year will carry out operations with foreign volunteer doctors to reconstruct their faces.

Dr Degrey Hubert is the head of the children's hospital in Niger's capital, Niamey, but his head nurse is impatient with him. "I told you already there are no needles for vaccinations left," she says when he asks about an 11-month-old girl who needs to be immunised.

The government's central medical store house has run out of needles, the way it runs out of most things most of the time.

There are nine children on the paediatric ward this morning. All need urgent infusion of glucose and water for malnutrition and dehydration. "I have only four infusions," says Dr Hubert: "How do you choose? Some of these children will be dead by Monday, and I have to decide which one gets it."

In his hospital are four wards of peeling paint, dirty mattresses and the sweet, sad smell of dried urine.

On the floor of one of the wards is a two-year-old girl called Assitou, with the face of an old woman. She weighs the same as three bags of sugar and her legs are as thick as celery. She is the third-born, and her mother Fatima looks, perhaps, 16 years old, but doesn't know what age she is — only that she has already lost her first two children.

"There was something sick in their stomach," she says. "The teacher in the village gave me the money to take her to hospital on the bus."

Assitou is silent. All the babies in the ward are silent, in the heat and the dirt and their sickness, there's no energy left to cry.

There is no famine, no flood, no war. This is as good as it gets in Niger, a former French colony of almost 10 million people on the west coast of Africa that many have never heard of.

Niger owes Britain $13 million. The country pays it off at the rate of $1.2 million a year. If Britain cancelled the debt for the millennium, the money saved would be enough to inoculate three-quarters of a million children.

One in three children born in Niger will die before they are five years old from hunger, measles, diarrhoea, meningitis, or some obscene mixture of the four.

"In the last five years I've seen the number of children dying from infectious diseases related to malnutrition creeping up from around 30 per cent to 50 per cent. It's getting worse," says Dr Hubert.

"The hospital gets no credit from the government because they have no money to give us. The people can't breathe under this debt.

"At consultations, when I write out a prescription for a mother she is crying before I finish writing it. She's saying, 'What will I do with that? My husband is not working and I have nothing'."

In the compound they are sleeping. The Grazer children and the parents have no idea when their children will be operated on.

Ali Abdou says it doesn't feel comforting to be here with his daughter among the other children with no faces: "I look at the others and I feel their pain. We are all waiting too long."

The sieve-maker says he prays only that Zeinabou will get better. In the mustard-coloured wards, among the sterilised gloves and antibiotics that look so out of place in the dirt of poverty, Ali Abdou says he wants the people from Germany fix her face.

"I want her to be educated and get a good job. I would like her to have a beautiful house with a car."

Peacemaker Clinton fails to win plaudits

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

BILL CLINTON visits Europe this week as a peacemaker who is strangely without honour. In Northern Ireland the role of the Clinton White House has been decisive, yet the president is denied his full share of the credit. In the Middle East the administration's role is potentially crucial, yet Clinton has mostly been unable to make it count or to win the confidence — let alone the applause — of the protagonists.

Clinton's Northern Ireland difficulties are easily explained. Though the United States has won many plaudits for its role in the Irish peace process — much of it directed to the talks chairman Senator George Mitchell as well as to the White House — it has not yet been able to reap the rewards that it would like.

Clinton ultimately seeks a domestic reward for his Irish policy. He wishes to be able to present himself to the 44 million Americans of Irish descent as The Man Who Brought Justice To Ireland. He wants to walk down Shankhill Road and Falls Road — as well as O'Connell Street — as the peacemaker, and to have television pictures of the happy event beamed into US homes during an important mid-term election year.

He was keen to go to Ireland in the run-up to next week's referendums on the peace accord. His advisers, anxious to milk any opportunity to present Clinton in a high-minded presidential light, were every bit as keen. The momentum for such a visit seemed irresistible. The opportunity could not have been more convenient either, since Clinton already planned to be in Europe, visiting Germany followed by a three-day trip to Britain for the world economic summit in Birmingham.

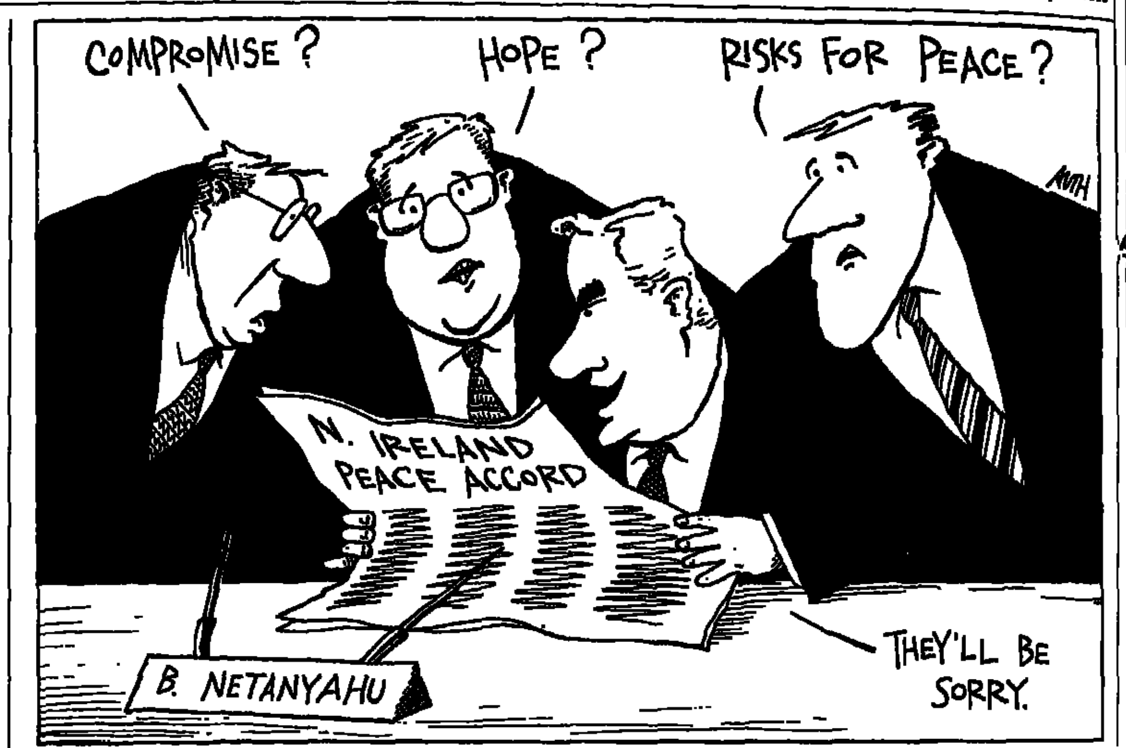
And yet it will not happen. It will not happen because Tony Blair agreed with the fears of the Unionist leader David Trimble that a Clinton visit might ignite a Protestant reaction. Blair said stay away, and Clinton duly obeyed.

There can be few places remaining in the world where the prospect of a visit by the US president is not desired. Northern Ireland is one of them, and it is to the White House's credit that it has accepted the snub. Clinton has, however, soothed his disappointment by making clear he wants to make the visit this year. For him, after all, the crucial deadline is not the May 22 referendums but the November mid-term US elections.

Like the Irish, the Jews are a crucial electoral consideration for US presidents. Like the Irish, the Jews lean historically towards the Democrats, and Clinton is bound to ensure that this loyalty is maintained.

He was successful when he put the Democratic party's historic Irish nationalism at hazard by committing himself to a compromise solution in Northern Ireland. Yet when he has tried to do the same thing with his party's historic support for Israel he has been much less successful.

Part of the explanation for this lies in the essential and obvious differences between the two intractable crises. Northern Ireland is relatively simple and not very dangerous compared with Israel. Even in Northern Ireland itself, only a minority is afraid of compromise. Neither the British nor the Irish people seek conflict, and their two governments are never under pressure to do anything except find a peaceful solution. Conflict in Northern Ireland has no consequences for other governments in the region.



In the Middle East the opposite is true, and the dangers are infinitely greater. But there is another crucial difference. Washington's Clinton-haters have been largely indifferent to the Northern Ireland process and have not tried to campaign against the proposed outcome. In the Middle East, on the other hand, they have become protagonists, seeking to intervene in the process and challenging the Democrats for the loyalty of the Jewish vote.

After two days of talks in London last week, the US asked Israel and the Palestinians to meet again this week in Washington, before Clinton left for Europe. Netanyahu demurred, then agreed, then changed his mind. But what was striking was not his familiar caution but the speed with which the Republicans on Capitol Hill urged him not to come.

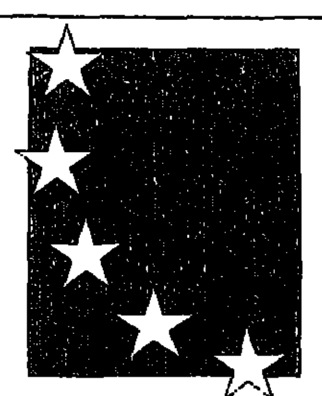
The rightwing Israeli government and the rightwing Congressional leadership have become exceptionally close in recent months. When Netanyahu came to Washington in January he courted, and was courted by, every shade of Clinton-phobe. Before he met Clinton he met not just the Congressional Republican leadership under Newt Gingrich, but also several inhabitants of the wilder shores of the fundamentalist Christian right, including long-time anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists such as Pat Robertson, who believes there is a Jewish-Marxist-Masonic plot to destroy the American way of life.

As chance would have it, this was also the week in which the Monica Lewinsky crisis broke. Netanyahu himself saw Clinton at bay at first hand and was able to depart from Washington without making a single concession to the Palestinians. January's heady combination of rightwing flattery and White House embarrassment seems to have convinced Netanyahu that Clinton is a weakened leader whose bluff can be called.

Everything that happened in the Middle East process this month will have strengthened him in this belief. As soon as the London talks broke up, Gingrich called a press conference to denounce Clinton as "pro-Arafat" and to urge Netanyahu to spurn Clinton's invitation to Washington. Senior Republicans vied with one another to find the most lurid insults to fling at the president. And all this happened several hours before Hillary Clinton went on a closed circuit link to a peace conference in Switzerland to offer her support for a future Palestinian state.

As political furores go, this was one of the most contrived in living memory. Different though the two situations are, the administration's essential strategy in the Middle East is very similar to its strategy in Northern Ireland — to push for agreement, to offer a forum for talks, to offer incentives for compromise, and even to suggest gentle threats where progress was lacking. This is hardly the stuff of sell-outs and betrayals, either in Northern Ireland or Israel, but one of the reasons why it is succeeding better in the one case than in the other is because an ideologically obsessive domestic opposition stayed out of the first conflict while playing a disruptive role in the second.

Three strikes for the Netherlands



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THE DUTCH are a splendidly collegial tribe at the heart of the European family. They work hard and inventively, run a famously tolerant and prosperous society, and promote their national interests in Europe without fuss or rancour. It is almost as if they were proud not to be noticed.

So it is odd to record that it was Dutch week in Europe. There were three reasons for this. The Netherlands held a general election, which attracted a brief flurry of interest, but the voters decided on little change. The headlines came primarily from the unedifying battle over the head of the new European Central Bank (ECB).

The final factor in the Dutch week went almost unreported, although it may be one of the most promising developments in Europe's electoral and political process.

The Dutch Central Planning Bureau is an institution that comes close to Plato's vision of a wise and trusted board of guardians. Its economic forecasts are accepted by government, unions and employers alike. Its assessments are the key to the annual wage round negotiations and are central to the impressive Dutch record of industrial peace. Before both this and the previous general election in 1994, the Bureau brought its reputation and expertise to the political process.

It devised an economic model that assumed no changes in taxes, government policies, monetary strategies and welfare systems for the next 10 years, and then stretched the model to 2020. The Bureau then plugged in the election promises of each of the main parties and published the results.

In 1994, which was the first time the proud and once dominant Christian Democrats were voted out of office since 1918 (allowing for the second world war interregnum), the Bureau played a crucial role. The Christian Democrats had promised tax cuts and, in classic Reagan-Thatcher style, had airily said they would generate so much economic growth that the welfare budgets could be comfortably afforded.

Not so, said the Bureau. Its model suggested that the Dutch could have one or the other: tax cuts or their welfare system, but not both. The Christian Democrats lost the 1994 election, paving the way for the centrist-liberal coalition that was re-elected last week.

The Bureau repeated the exercise for last week's election. The Christian Democrats were told that their plans would leave unemployment unchanged by the time of the next election in 2002. Since Dutch unemployment is at 5 per cent, this should not have been a devastating judgment. The problem is that the Dutch have by far the highest proportion of part-time employment in Europe, at about 40 per cent of the workforce. And the parties of the left made much of the widening divergences in incomes in what was once a highly egalitarian society.

This argument, along with a strikingly good result from the Bureau assessment, helped the Green Left party more than double its number of seats, from five to 11. The Bureau found that its policies of a shorter working week, along with green taxes on energy and pollution to finance job creation, would indeed cut unemployment.

But 11 seats in a parliament of 150 do not go far. The Labour party, led by the prime minister, Wim Kok, increased its seats from 37 to 45. Its main coalition allies, the free-market Liberals, led by the unusually acerbic (for a Dutchman) Fritz Bolkestein, went up from 31 to 37.

This is where it gets complicated. The Liberals on most issues are to the right of the Christian Democrats. So in 1994 their coalition with Labour had to have a third party as a midwife: the centrist and anti-ideological reform group known as D-66. D-66 were the big losers last week, sinking from 24 to 14 seats.

It has been an odd coalition. Bolkestein has not joined the government, but he supports it in parliament. He has also been sceptical of the government's commitment to the European single currency, sounding uncannily like a British Conservative when questioning the fudges that allowed Italy to qualify.

But the policy of modest tax cuts on which Kok ran allowed Bolkestein to support the coalition, even though he campaigned against Kok in the vain hope that his party might win enough seats to make him the senior coalition partner.

The surprise was that the row at the Brussels summit over Wim Duisenberg's appointment to run the ECB should have had so little effect on the Dutch poll.

The French bullied everyone into accepting a deal by which Duisenberg would step down after four years, to be replaced by a French central banker, Jean-Claude Trichet. The row put a strain on Kok's friendship with Tony Blair, who was not thought to have handled the summit well, and severely tested the Franco-German relationship. But while the summit deal was something of a snub to the Dutch, it had no real impact on the election.

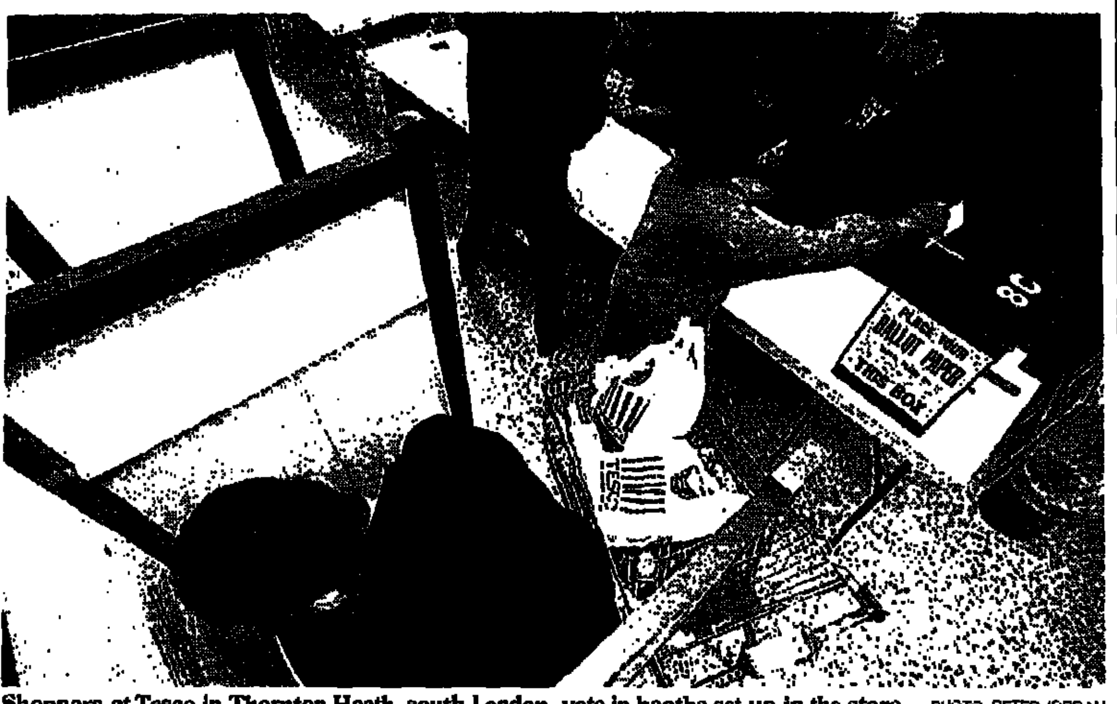
When Duisenberg appeared before the European Parliament for his confirmation hearings, he inspired the MEPs to cheers by asserting that the summit deal was not worth the paper it had been written on. He would not even think about retiring until after July 2002.

Duisenberg was the real Dutch turn-up of the week. His defiant style, and insistent display of spirited independence, suggested that Europe's first central banker could surprise us all. He and the Dutch way may yet do Europe's political systems a great deal of good.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Blair pledges to counter voter apathy

Peter Hetherington
and Michael White



Shoppers at Tesco in Thornton Heath, south London, vote in booths set up in the store PHOTO: PETER JORDAN

TONY BLAIR last week reacted strongly to evidence of unprecedented apathy among voters by promising to press ahead with modernising local government to counter the lowest recorded turnout in local elections in England.

With the Tories celebrating a modest recovery in contests for 166 councils, the Liberal Democrats eating further into Labour's northern strongholds, and the Government claiming further advances in London, all main parties could claim some successes in the first big electoral test since the general election.

But with apathy on an unprecedented scale — barely one in five Liverpool electors turned out to give the Liberal Democrats their first metropolitan council — the Prime Minister acknowledged that local government needed a radical overhaul.

Mr Blair hailed Labour's successes in London — where it gained control in Brent, Waltham Forest, Lambeth and Harrow — as a triumph for party modernisation, but acknowledged that voters in once rock-solid, unmodernised northern strongholds — plus Hackney and his own backyard, Islington, in London — had given Labour a bloody nose.

"We are right to press on with the modernisation of local government which gives . . . better responsibilities, and better ways of delivering services. For Labour there is something to be learned," he said.

"Where in London we have turned round the party very considerably, and have got good New Labour councils, they're doing extremely well. In some of the Labour heartlands we have been given a message from the electorate which we need to take account of."

Harrow, where a Blairite Labour group seized control and the Lib Dems lost 13 seats, caused particular satisfaction at Labour's Millbank HQ. Mr Blair was not alone in using local results to draw sweeping conclusions to support his modernising message that the problem lies in Old Labour attitudes.

Tory activists in flagship councils such as Westminster and Wandsworth — where Conservatives gained seats instead of losing them — attributed success to lean and efficient local services. Paddy Ashdown's Lib Dem critics claimed the results showed that confronting Labour works better than cosying up, as the party leader is accused of doing.

The Government has promised a white paper this summer on the way forward for councils, with measures to revitalise local democracy — from annual elections to slimmed down authorities and elected mayors. The idea is to build on the experiment in London, where voters endorsed plans for an elected mayor by a margin of three to one — on a poor turnout of 34 per cent. Turnouts outside the capital were even lower.

Sunday voting, and such gimmicks as supermarket polling stations might also develop, though polling stations at south London supermarkets produced lower-than-average turnouts last week.

Desperate for a success to legitimate William Hague's becalmed leadership, the Conservative chairman, Lord Parkinson, hailed a "modest recovery". The Tories regained their position as the second party of local government, gaining 255 seats and two councils, including symbolic Tunbridge Wells.

"The national polls have been showing a swing against us since the general election and, far from confirming that, we made overall gains," Lord Parkinson said.

The Liberal Democrats, defending a near-record number of seats gained four years ago, lost 122 councillors and seven councils, including the Isle of Wight — but, crucially, gained Liverpool and made enough gains in Sheffield to put them in sight of taking control by the millennium.

Mr Ashdown claimed the results were a "success" for his party, the only one significantly to improve on its general election vote — 9 points up at 25 per cent. He maintained that when judged by the number of councils under Lib Dem control, his party, rather than the Tories was in reality the second party of local government.

London backs elected mayor

LAST WEEK'S referendum among London's 5 million voters on the Government's blueprint for an elected mayor and assembly in the capital showed up to a 4:1 majority in favour. But the turnout was barely one in three, *writes Peter Hetherington*.

Labour moved quickly to derail the bandwagon of the favourite candidate for the post amid growing party in-fighting for the leadership of the capital.

With opinion polls showing Ken Livingstone, the Brent East MP, as the favourite, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, indicated that the party's national executive committee would move to block the former Greater London Council leader.

While Tories and the Liberal Democrats will be holding ballots for party members to make the final decision from a shortlist, Labour appears determined to let the leadership effectively decide its candidate, and believes that Glenda Jackson, environment and transport minister, and Hampstead and Highgate MP, will prove an ideal alternative to Mr Livingstone.

Mr Livingstone said: "I would find it bizarre if Tony Blair, having argued for one-member, one-vote, for virtually everything else, didn't go along with that in London. It would be equally wrong if the NEC took the opportunity to vet people on a political basis."

Against the background of muted endorsement for government plans for an elected mayor, backed by a new, slim-line Greater London Authority, it is clear that most Londoners are uninterested in reform of local government in the capital.

The Bleeper Folk stay on message

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE Beaker Folk were hunters who lived in the bronze age, around 1600BC. They are named after the tall pottery cups found in their graves. One imagines the beakers decorated with pictures of the Teletubbies or slogans of the day such as "Tough on mammoths, tough on the causes of mammoths".

The Bleeper Folk live amongst us now, and are Labour MPs. They are told what to say by means of bleepers, or pagers. Some will be buried with them too, otherwise how would they know what to think in the afterlife?

The other day I sat next to a Labour MP at lunch. "Bleep bleep," went his bleeper. He pulled it out and showed me a message which read: "Members are reminded not to take part in newspaper or television surveys, polls or questionnaires. These are often damaging to the party . . ." or some such.

There was no reason for this message; it merely reminded the MP that he was not permitted to hold or express any opinions of his own.

When they are in the Commons, MPs are obliged to set their pagers to vibrate mode. But that doesn't stop them receiving a stream of messages, which they will continue to do right up to the time that Labour HQ at Millbank Tower finds a way to inject instructions directly into their brains.

Martin Bell (Ind, Tatton) made the point last week at Prime Minister's Questions. Would Labour members, he asked, be permitted a free vote when the clause on predatory newspaper pricing came back to the Commons? (The correct answer is: don't be daft. The only time Labour MPs have had a free vote — on fox-hunting — the Government ignored it.)

"Disregarding their pagers for a while," Mr Bell continued to happy laughter, "they could enjoy a vibrant democracy instead of a vibrating one."

It was Mr Blair's birthday and he had lots of presents. One of the nicest was from Hywel Williams — once a close aide to John Redwood — who has said in a book that his former boss thought William Hague the worst of all six Tory leadership candidates last year.

Mr Redwood sat one place away from Mr Hague, separated by Cheryl Gillan, a charming and comfortably upholstered human demilitarised zone. Now and again he nodded at what Mr Hague said, as if he believed a word of it.

Mr Blair's other gifts were all from the Bleeper Folk. They had been instructed to ask admiring questions about Labour councils as England voted in local elections.

Tory councils were not passing on education funds, trilled David Crausby of Bolton. Ian Pearson of Dudley listed "three incontrovertible facts" about education spending in Dudley. For most of us they were incontrovertible because we know nothing about Dudley's education budget. But Mr Blair, by a happy coincidence, knows everything. He mentioned the "incontrovertible fact" that the Government is spending £124,000 more on books for children in Dudley. The bleeper makes every man a master of his brief.

Someone from South Tyneside praised South Tyneside's faultless Labour council, and demanded an apology from Paddy Ashdown "who, on a visit to South Tyneside, openly criticised the leader of South Tyneside council". This was greeted more with hilarity than horror.

It was the most sickening display of sycophancy yet. Finally Gordon Prentice (Lab, Pendle) rose. Surely he wouldn't join the greasy choir? He did not. He merely said that he planned to meet local dentists to discuss the politics of dentistry.

But of course his bleeper will tell him exactly what to say: "Voh Laygur fuh a be'er Bri'nn an' a Gummnt wi' teef."

Railtrack 'going off the rails'

Keith Harper

AN OVERWHELMING number of railway managers do not trust Railtrack on safety and want an independent body to take over responsibility, an industry survey revealed this week.

Two out of three managers believe that the system of rail regulation is not effective or accountable enough. Many say that Railtrack has a vested interest in the outcome of accident investigations.

The survey, among 235 managers, was initiated by the Transport and Salaried Staffs' Association, after reports about growing concern on railway safety. The report shows that seven out of 10 managers want an independent safety body, while a third believe that the regulators' own safety targets are inadequate.

Pressure for the Government to act on railway safety has been mounting for months. Ministers have asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to investigate whether Railtrack should be allowed to carry out its own safety inquiries.

This follows a series of derailments and a damaging HSE report expressing disquiet about parts of the system and the threat to the safety of passengers. The Commons Transport Select Committee has now joined the debate by deciding to carry out its own inquiry.

Beatles win legal tussle

THE Beatles-for-sale court case ended last week when a High Court judge ruled that a recording of the band made in 1962 should not be put on sale, *writes Dan Glaister*.

The case, during which 54-year-old former Beatle George Harrison took the stand, pitted the might of the Beatles, Apple Corps, EMI and Capitol records against Lingasong Music Ltd and Edward Taylor, the man who made the recording on the night of the Beatles' last appearance at the Star Club, Hamburg.

Taylor, the leader of King Size Taylor and The Dominoes, who shared the bill with the Beatles that night, claimed John Lennon had given him permission to record the Beatles. But Harrison and the remaining Beatles, along with Yoko Ono, argued no such agreement had been reached.

The judge ordered all copies of the recording to be handed over to the Beatles' solicitors.

Ulster can be reconciled

MAKING war is hard and painful, but making peace is not much easier. That much has been clear in Northern Ireland in recent days. The people are heading towards a vote for peace on May 22, and yet the emotions of war linger on: the hurt, the anger even the bravery have not gone away.

In the most literal sense the war is being kept alive by the armed rejectionists of both sides, the hardline republicans and loyalists who refuse to countenance any compromise, least of all the agreement sealed on Good Friday. One half of this macabre alliance is the Loyalist Volunteer Force; the other is the Continuity IRA, which has been in the background for 10 years, and a new breakaway group dubbed "the real IRA". This faction said it was behind an attempted mortar bomb attack on an RUC station in County Fermanagh last weekend — and warned that its ultimate target remained the British Cabinet. Such talk chills the heart of anyone who hoped the Good Friday deal might rid Northern Ireland of violence once and for all.

But even the peacemakers have not quite ceased all hostilities. Much of the bitterness endures. Unionists, for example, could not suppress their revulsion at seeing men they regard as cold-eyed killers feted as heroes at the Sinn Fein *ardfheis* last weekend. For them, the sight of the IRA Balcombe Street gang receiving a 10-minute standing ovation from Sinn Fein delegates at their Dublin conference was too much to take. They rounded on the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, for granting terrorists a 24-hour release in order to attend the gathering — accusing her of "insensitivity" to their pain.

And yet these complaints, like the rejectionist antics of the hardliners, are hardly grounds for despair. On the contrary, they are the inevitable, if unhappy byproducts of a *successful* peace process. If there was no genuine prospect of compromise, the fundamentalists would feel no need to scare voters with violence and mayhem. Similarly, although the elevation of convicted killers into political leaders is hard to stomach — as the Unionists can testify — it is an unavoidable feature of any sincere attempt to end an armed conflict. Ask the people of South Africa, Israel or Palestine. The fact that the peace process has already reached the stage where former men of violence are demanding a seat at the democratic table should be seized on by Unionists as a sign of hope.

The remarkable scenes in Dublin over the weekend make such optimism wholly justified. Sinn Fein not only backed the Good Friday agreement, thereby tacitly accepting the partition of Ireland, but also agreed to participate in an elected assembly for the province. Gerry Adams described it as historic, and even the Ulster Unionists' Ken Maginnis admitted it was a "gigantic step".

Some observers have been sceptical, imagining that republicans see this move as just a ruse, remaining poised to return to violence in an instant. But one should look closely at the words of the veteran "hardmen" themselves. Joe Cahill said that, after more than 50 years of struggle, the agreement was republicanism's best opportunity yet. Padraig Wilson, the commander of the IRA in the Maze, told the party the struggle was not over yet, but that a Yes vote was the next step iorward.

The republican movement is making a genuine shift. The rejectionists will continue to make their bombs, but as politics replaces violence they will find no community to sustain them. It is not easy, but the ways of war are slowly being replaced.

India sets the world a test

INDIA has exploded three nuclear devices for muddled reasons to do with nationalism, the exigencies of internal politics, and international prestige. The most benign explanation is that New Delhi is signalling that it can from now on maintain an advanced nuclear capability by means other than testing, and that it will soon sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. India may plan to follow the test-and-sign strategy of both China and France, with the difference that India is not a declared nuclear power. In dealing with New Delhi, one problem will be that the United States is committed to sanctions against states which test, a course which might be counter-productive in the Indian case. If, for whatever reason, testing were to continue or be followed by actual deployment, Pakistan might decide to test. China, which has signed the treaty, would probably stick to it but take other, serious, military measures. The shaky structure that until now has kept nuclear weapons under some global control would be endangered.

Why has the new Indian government, led by the Bharatiya Janata party, taken this step? The answer has little to do with genuine security considerations. Internally, the nuclear policy of the BJP is popular among an electorate which sees it only as a matter of national assertion. It is an issue on which the coalition the BJP heads can agree more easily than others. Internationally, the Indian decision to test may have been triggered by the knowledge that President Clinton, on his trip to Beijing next month, expects to secure Chinese support for the Missile Technology Control Regime, which would end Chinese missile help for Pakistan. Clinton might well then turn to India, as he prepares to visit New Delhi in the autumn, for some balancing action on proliferation.

It looks as if New Delhi saw a window for testing and took it. The result is this dangerous precedent, to which the only real answer is genuine disarmament negotiations by the established nuclear powers. There are no doubt various lesser ways of placating or persuading India. But only progressive nuclear disarmament will remove the justification for the decision India has taken, and which many other countries may be tempted to take.

Racism and the police

IT TOOK five years to set up the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the bright black teenager, who while waiting at a southeast London bus stop in 1993 was stabbed to death by a gang of white youths. Now both the police and the community are questioning whether the inquiry is doing more harm than good. Some community leaders have spoken of race relations being set back for years by the evidence which is emerging — police officers still refusing to recognise the racist nature of the crime and the investigating team's complacency in the face of the horrific killing. But Sir Paul Condon, whose first speech when he was made Metropolitan Commissioner was to stress the importance of combatting racism, has expressed concern at the way the inquiry is being turned into a show trial of his police service. The dignified family at the centre of the tragedy, Stephen's parents, even held a press conference of their own to complain about the police.

The inquiry was always going to have its limitations. It could never deliver justice because it is not a criminal court. The killers are beyond its jurisdiction. The criminal prosecution service decided not to proceed against the five chief suspects, a gang of five white youths who were known to be racist and had a history of violence. Three of these youths were privately prosecuted by the Lawrence family, but the case collapsed when the court ruled their key prosecution witness unreliable. The purpose of the inquiry is not to identify the killers, but to establish the reason why the killers got away with their crime.

The police were never going to emerge from the inquiry with credit. Sir Paul had better just grit his teeth. A nine-month inquiry by the Police Complaints Authority has produced one indictment of their performance and a painstaking inquest another. But it has been the lawyer appointed by the Government to lead the inquiry who has produced the most searing criticism: the 14-day delay between police being given the names of the five main suspects and their arrest; the failure to follow up 26 other tip-offs identifying the gang, three of them from police officers; and blunders in the search of the suspects' homes.

The inquiry is important for two reasons. First because the five suspects, who have never spoken publicly about what happened on the night of the murder, will be required to speak or go to prison. They escaped cross-examination at the inquest by claiming "legal privilege". This escape route will not be available before the inquiry. Secondly, once the formal hearing is over, the inquiry will move into its second phase and seek ways in which the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crimes can be improved. Better race relations requires nothing less. Restoring the black community's confidence in the police is crucial.

Cook in a fine stew of his own pomposity

Peter Preston

THE REAL problem for Robin Cook, the British Foreign Secretary, can now be encapsulated in a single word. Not mendacity, veracity, cupidity — or even stupidity — but something rather more lethal. The word is: pomposity. It sits over his head at every public performance like a baleful balloon. It can suddenly infect his tongue in mid-sentence so that perfectly sensible ideas swell out of control and turn to a helpless giggle. And when the comedy called Sierra Leone is over, it will linger malevolently on. The Malvolio syndrome.

What did Mr Cook do last Sunday? He found another tonne of newsprint dumped on his doorstep. He decided he better get weaving on the TV rebuttal front. He called up Sir David Frost. But see . . . the balloon settles instantly. The Foreign Office solemnly announces that the Foreign Secretary has cancelled his engagements for the day in order to concentrate on this crisis. What engagements? Breakfast with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, rather than with Sir David. A single transferable kipper.

Thus we wind inexorably through the usual stuff that ministers in the mire are driven to recite. Full and open inquiries by some unnamed (and as yet unfound) outsider of unimpeachable repute — who will begin work once the quite separate Customs & Excise inquiry, which of course can't be prejudiced, is complete. You can see the long grass growing as the sub-clauses accumulate.

In the broad, Mr Cook has set himself up. The trouble with "ethical foreign policies" — as with John Major's return to family basics — is that every tiny gaffe bloats in the uncovering. And, beyond that, the Cook reputation in Opposition weighs him down. He was Labour's feistiest, most lacerating debater — but baby, look at him now.

Such handicaps, though, are by no means insuperable. By most informed lights, Cook is actually doing a solid job. The best Foreign Office brains like his energy and the way he involves them. The place is buzzing as seldom before. The people he deals with across the world find him shrewd and well briefed. He ought to be able to fight his way out of any number of corners — if only he could remember how to fight.

The old Cook would have looked at his media briefs for the week and laughed. He'd have blanched at the thought of handing Michael Howard a few free hits. He would have reached for his gag book; and let us see the human being, in there somewhere behind the eyes, seething over the cock-ups.

But the new Cook does not make jokes any longer. They are unseemly. He has set aside the crisply coined phrase in favour of Whitehall Pontifacatory. He carries the majesty of his role with him into every television studio. He speaks at dictation pace, as though we are all required to take notes.

How would other ministers be coping with Sierra Leone now? You can write the Tony Blair script. "Look, I tell you — if there's something wrong here, I'm as upset over it as any of you and I'm going to make damned sure we get the facts out and stop it ever happening again." Trust-me-I'm-fuming. You can see the line taken by John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister: "I'm bloody cheesed off and I'm going to bloody well bang a few heads together." You know Jack Straw, the Home Minister, would thank the press effusively for getting all this out into the open — and promise a little instant retribution.

All three approaches, purpose built to the personality, do work because they have worked. The question for Cook is whether he can find a parallel pitch. It may be too late. The fiasco of his marriage breakdown had nothing and everything to do with politics, negotiated with galumphing pomp. It left him weakened in the hierarchy, a career stalled, a future threat defused. Such weakness begets further weakness. He will soon be dispensable, off to Industry or Agriculture or nowhere in particular in a year or two, taking his ethical package with him.

That would be a sad waste of original thinking power. Labour is not so flush with talent that it can afford to write Cook off to bitter experience. He should be saved. The question is whether he can save himself. Has he, for instance, become irredeemably pompous of his own volition, or has the fact of power, of government, thrust pomposity upon him? Merely becoming a minister can squeeze the juice out of some politicians.

Is there a particularly virulent strain of FO pomposity? Malcolm Rifkind, the former foreign secretary, a sharp, witty lawyer, grew orotund the moment he crossed the threshold. John Major, non-pomposity incarnate, floundered in his brief spell there. Those who prosper — from Carrington to Hurd — are toffs (or acting toffs) who survive by seeming grander than the office itself.

IT ISN'T impossible to strike a better note. The former prime minister, Jim Callaghan, long ago, struck it precisely: informed, in touch, but never blown out of the bluff persona he wore through all seasons like a cherished anorak. Callaghan had his disasters too, but he could always smile and dust himself down. He instinctively kept his distance.

Above all, Cook needs such distance. We do not see him bleed, but we know he is bleeding all over his bathroom. We do not hear him rage, but we can feel the rage bottled within him. We know things can go terribly wrong, but we also know that he will be the last to acknowledge it. "I don't have the answer to that," Callaghan would say jovially when somebody bowled him a bouncer. "But I tell you what. I'll find out."

Callaghan would have grinned about Sierra Leone and moved on. "Nice to know one British export company delivers the goods." There'd have been no twitchy, preening sense of crisis. Can Cook learn to sing the same sort of song? Can he relax? Can he smile?

The simple things are becoming the imperative things. Time, perhaps, for him to sign up the Labour MP, Ken Livingstone, as private drama tutor. Londoners, it seems, don't remember the shambles of Ken in power; they only remember the self-deprecating gags. Put that in your gunboat, Foreign Secretary, and try to smoke it.

Prophet of the left rooted in the past

Noam Chomsky, arch critic of US capitalism, is failing to bring his radical message up to date, argues **Hugo Young**

THERE are some things which politicians in Britain have given up saying. When I heard a sermon on Easter Sunday that talked, without any sense of daring, about social injustice in Britain and the grotesque immorality of the world economic system, I experienced severe, but enlivening, culture-shock. For this, you have to go to church? Two years of listening to pre- and post-election political speeches screened all such language out of anyone's experience. Even for the remaining standard-bearers of the left, that kind of utterance has become a private eccentricity. Such is the power of the propaganda of the deed, Blairism, literally to wipe out the propaganda of the word.

It's not that people don't dare think about the equality that used to be called old-fashioned, they simply know it's on the agenda of nobody who matters. They sound cultish and defeated, at large on the fringe of a world the centre of which has passed them by. We talk a lot about the feebleness of opposition on the right, but far more spacious territory is voided by the silence of opposition on the left.

Breaking out of this intellectual barricade requires, perhaps, a major prophet, and the voice duly presented itself at a meeting in London last week. Noam Chomsky certainly has the credentials. He is one of the radical heroes of our age, a man once described in the New York Times as "arguably the most important intellectual alive today". The unspoken question before him, I think, was whether there is indeed a radicalism that can begin to impose itself on the modern, centrist world with anything like the power available when those words were written, which is more than 20 years ago.

Chomsky is famous for combining world-class professorial status, as a scholar of language and linguistic philosophy, with a commitment to political speech and action that is seldom found among intellectuals of the English-speaking world. He made an 80-minute speech that toured the globe, with a severe indictment of the United States and its favourite ally, the UK, for their conduct as policemen of global capitalism. It had a tone not heard on a British political platform in recent years.

Washington's whole post-war history, Chomsky argued, was of hemispheric domination: Brazil, Haiti, Cuba, Guatemala were cases in point. The US economy, he said, was marked by savage inequities that made a mockery of the economic miracle about which Bill Clinton, the establishment press and the stock-owning public were so wonderfully smug. He cited the relevant, irrefutable statistics.

This economy, furthermore, was far from being a triumph of private enterprise, but a corporatist structure with decades of state, often Pentagon-underwritten, subsidy behind it, in which the profiteering relationships between government and business were invariably conducted at the expense of the public interest. After the people had taken all the risk, the share-owners took all the profit. The people, both of the US and of Third World countries, were now in course of being savagely duped by international trading deals, ranging from the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) to the embryonic Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

All this was delivered in professorial mode, lightened by ready shafts of dry sarcasm. And, it made some telling points. It's never too late to be updated on the government-industrial complex; and the secrecy behind which MAI is being debated by the advanced countries of the world is a justifiable rebuke to the slackness of the media.

But this was not, I think, the lecture the audience had come to hear. They were respectful, and offered the occasional burst of complicit laughter at Chomsky's wry little jokes. But there was not the faintest frisson of excitement at the presence of a dangerous radical voice.

The rooting of the message was significantly in the past. It was the professor's old, meticulous researches into the iniquities of US policy in Guatemala in the 1950s and Cuba in the 1960s that continued to form the basis of his case against Washington. He does a lot of work, trawling the press, which he otherwise cites as an establishment conspiracy against the truth, for revealing evidence about Nafta and MAI. But his fixation on the abuse of power neglects to consider a lot of pressing modern problems.

Chomsky made a relevant attack on the corruption of Suharto's Indonesia, and the seeming farce of the International Monetary Fund bailing out a deficit that could be otherwise made good by the decades-long profiteering theft of the Suharto family. But the Asian bail-out issue is more complex than that, and the power relationships between rich and poor countries cannot be subjected to ridicule — without a considered remedy. The question of an ethical foreign policy can either be handled with a mocking laugh, or treated as a seriously complicated issue deserving of a radical intellectual's attention.

Chomsky speaks from the unfashionable assumption that the world would be a better place if the values of American capitalism were a) properly understood and b) severely challenged. It is good to be reminded.

In the end, though, the prophet was a disappointment. He suggested, by inference, how far the progressive-radical cause has to go before it's likely to secure a purchase on the thinking of the world as it has become. It has not found its bearings after the collapse of European socialism. It has neither enemies with the old magnetic resonance, nor models from some utopian world. It is fated, at this stage of evolution, to be trawling the Internet in search of confirmation that capitalism does not work, without producing the text, or arousing the multitude, with a promise of something different.

The price of poverty . . . A desolate figure in the bleak landscape of Niger, where one in three children dies before the age of five

Why the poor are picking up the tab

The crippling cost of debt repayments has returned many of the poorest African nations to the slavery of poverty, hunger and disease, writes **Larry Elliott**

IT IS just before dawn in Kinshasa on October 30, 1974. In a boxing ring in the middle of a football stadium lies the body of George Foreman, knocked out by Muhammad Ali in one of the biggest sporting upsets of the century. As the lightning crackles overhead, 60,000 Zaireans cheer Ali, world champion again after seven years.

It took 10 seconds for the referee to count Foreman out and end the contest billed as the Rumble in the Jungle. It has taken 24 years for the West to face up to the enormity of the debt crisis in the developing world.

After years of foot-dragging, the need to relieve the poorest nations of their unpayable debts has moved to the top of the agenda for the meeting of the Group of Eight (G8) leaders in Birmingham this week. Backed by a coalition of churches and charities, Tony Blair will be urging the West to make deep cuts in the debt burden an urgent priority for the summit.

The UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, said after the G8 foreign and finance ministers' meeting last weekend that he was confident the scene was set for a major debt breakthrough.

Officials were due to spend the week piecing together a deal to provide speedier relief for seven African countries grappling with mountainous debts in the aftermath of military conflicts — Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, the two Congos, Sierra Leone and Somalia.

And Britain is attempting to bring all eligible countries under the umbrella of the joint World Bank-International Monetary Fund Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative by the millennium.

The Prime Minister was still at Oxford university when Ali and Foreman left the ring to collect their purses, more than $5 million each for 24 minutes' work, provided by Zaire's tyrannical president, Mobutu Sese Seko, to spread his name and the name of his country across the globe.

The fight did that all right. But at what a cost — $10 million was money Zaire could ill afford 24 years ago, and the torrential tropical thunderstorm that flooded the Stade du 20 Mai within minutes of the fight's end was symbolic of the economic torrent that was to engulf Africa from the mid-1970s onwards.

When the bills started to come in for the continent's collective Rumble in the Jungle, they could not be paid. One poster for the fight, "From the Slave ship to the championship", had to be withdrawn after it offended Zaireans. It has an ironic ring to it now, because for many African nations the crushing burden of debt has returned them to a form of slavery.

How so? Simple statistics illustrate the horrific cost of the crisis.

According to the United Nations Human Development Report, about a quarter of the world's population — some 1.3 billion people — are living on incomes of less than a dollar a day. Nearly a billion are illiterate, some 840 million go hungry or are living from hand to mouth. And whereas those lucky enough to live in the developed West can expect to live until they are almost 80, nearly one third of the people in the least developed countries are not expected to survive to 40.

The epicentre of the problem is sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for 33 of the 42 low-income countries that the World Bank rates as highly indebted. In 1962, sub-Saharan Africa owed $3 billion. By the early 1980s its debts had mounted to $142 billion. Today the debt mountain stands at $222 billion, which is about $370 for every man, woman and child in the continent. And it is getting bigger as countries fall behind with repayments.

What is more, the gulf between rich and poor is getting wider. The share of the poorest 20 per cent of the world's people in global income stands at a paltry 1.1 per cent, down from 1.4 per cent in 1991 and 2.3 per cent in 1960. The income of the top 20 per cent was 30 times higher than the poorest 20 per cent in 1960. By 1991 it was 61 times higher. The UN says the latest figures put it at 78 times as high.

But it is not just in per capita income that the disparities show up. The UN's annual Human Development Index is effectively a league table for standards of life looking at a range of social indicators, that include illiteracy, child mortality, access to health services, and life expectancy.

For the richest 20 countries, the index reveals few serious social problems. For example, in Britain, ranked 15th, nobody lacks access to health care or water, there is no adult illiteracy, 10,000 children die before the age of one, and every child goes to school.

Now take Ethiopia, 170th out of 175 in the table. There, 54 per cent are without access to health services and 75 per cent lack access to safe water. The adult illiteracy rate is 64.5 per cent, 625,000 children died in 1995 before the age of one. There are no figures for children not in school.

Aid agencies say that a concerted attack on poverty must start with a grassroots expansion of basic social services, particularly health and education. However, the poorest nations have precious little to spare on schools and hospitals once they have serviced their enormous debts.

According to Oxfam, more than 100,000 Ethiopian children die each year from easily preventable diseases, but debt payments are four times more than health spending.

In Africa as a whole, one out of every two children does not go to school, but governments spend four times more in debt payments to creditors in the North than they spend on health and education.

WHY DID this happen? One school of thought says the West is to blame for encouraging developing nations to borrow recklessly recycled petrodollars from Opec nations for inappropriate projects. Another school of thought lays the blame squarely with corrupt post-colonial élites, who squandered money from loans on grandiose projects or salted it away in Swiss bank accounts.

There is an element of truth in both arguments, but the real explanation goes deeper. As David Landes puts it in his book, The Wealth And Poverty Of Nations*: "The continent's problems go much deeper than bad policies, and bad policies are not an accident.

"Good government is not to be had for the asking," Landes argues. "It took Europe centuries to acquire it, so why should Africa do so in mere decades, especially after the distortions of colonialism?"

Many of the nations that gained independence in the 1950s and 1960s were artificial constructs of the colonial era, built around commodities and with borders often cutting across racial and tribal lines. On top of this was overlaid a centralised state, with power concentrated in a party, a ruling élite and ultimately an all-powerful leader. This quasi-Soviet system of government was a disaster, particularly when the economic climate turned nasty.

In the 1950s and 1960s rising commodity prices fed through into higher per capita incomes and more money for health, education and infrastructure, and still left something to be creamed off into Swiss bank accounts. But in the 1970s and 1980s commodity prices fell sharply, so that they are now lower in real terms than during the Great Depression 70 years ago.

The problem of falling commodity prices was intensified by higher oil prices, and the debts run up to pay for the imported machinery designed to enhance the prospects of industrialisation. Africa was caught in the jaws of a vice; to make matters worse most of the borrowed money went on projects utterly inappropriate for the needs of developing countries.

To crown it all, the West then imposed economic policies on the indebted countries that made matters worse still. The idea behind structural adjustment was that countries would export their way out of trouble, but since they were often one- or two-commodity economies, attempting to increase exports involved increasing supply, which drove down prices.

Aid agencies argue that action to help the poorest countries is long overdue. Addressing Chase Manhattan shareholders on the eve of the Ali-Foreman clash, Nelson Rockefeller said: "I hope you enjoy the fight, because you're paying for it."

Rockefeller was wrong. The banks were bailed out by the International Monetary Fund, which lent money to poor nations so they could pay off their commercial creditors. Zaire has not been so lucky. The people there are still picking up the tab.

*The Wealth and Poverty of Nations published in the UK by Little, Brown, £20, and in the US by Norton, $30

In Brief

THE world's largest industrial merger saw Daimler-Benz agree a $90 billion deal with American car giant Chrysler. The German company has also been linked with a bid for Nissan Diesel Motor. Meanwhile Rolls-Royce Motors could be snatched from under the noses of BMW after German rival Volkswagen offered $700 million for the luxury car company.

SBC Communications and Ameritech, two "Baby Bells", are to merge in the biggest US telecoms deal worth $62 billion.

ROYAL Bank of Scotland revealed it had increased its provision for the impact of the Asian economic crisis to nearly $100 million. RBS unveiled better than expected half-year figures, with pre-tax profits up by 21 per cent, to $730 million.

SCOTTISH fraudster Donald Bickerstaff received a 10-year prison sentence for swindling American investors out of more than $10 million.

SHARES in the music group PolyGram soared after it was effectively put up for sale by Philips, the Dutch electronics group. Seagram, the entertainment and drinks group, was said to be close to cementing a $10 billion takeover offer only days after walking away from talks with Britain's EMI.

POWERS to levy unlimited fines and prosecute in the criminal courts anyone suspected of financial wrongdoing are to be given to the Financial Services Authority. Meanwhile trading giant Sumitomo is to pay British regulators a record $8 billion in settlement for the havoc wreaked on London metal markets by its rogue copper trader Yasuo Hamanaka.

THE army of 500,000 small investors who applied for a stake in Thomson Travel made an instant 15 per cent paper profit as shares in the UK's biggest tour operator started trading at a premium to the 170p flotation price.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates May 11	Sterling rates April 27
Australia	2.5689-2.5709	2.5771-2.5807
Austria	20.37-20.39	21.01-21.03
Belgium	59.70-59.80	61.67-61.78
Canada	2.3351-2.3380	2.4020-2.4043
Denmark	11.03-11.04	11.39-11.40
France	9.707-9.716	10.01-10.02
Germany	2.8952-2.8980	2.9867-2.9893
Hong Kong	12.63-12.64	12.93-12.94
Ireland	1.1501-1.1524	1.1824-1.1848
Italy	2,854-2,858	2,951-2,955
Japan	216.25-216.51	220.66-220.95
Netherlands	3.2624-3.2653	3.3581-3.3609
New Zealand	3.0157-3.0215	3.0119-3.0192
Norway	12.10-12.11	12.43-12.44
Portugal	296.67-297.02	306.13-306.48
Spain	245.92-246.29	253.70-253.97
Sweden	12.42-12.44	12.88-12.90
Switzerland	2.4173-2.4204	2.4858-2.4889
USA	1.6900-1.6916	1.6692-1.6702
ECU	1.4706-1.4723	1.5113-1.5131

FTSE100 Share Index up 908.9 at 6096.3, FTSE 250 Index up 208.4 at 5772.4. Gold down $0.60 at $300.15.

Bickering has always been the EU way

EDITORIAL

ANECDOTE and History with a capital H are two very different things. The compromise that was cobbled together in Brussels on May 2 over who should head the European Central Bank (ECB) falls into the category of anecdote. It has rightly been described as laborious and unsound. But whenever the European Union has made progress, it has always done so in precisely that way — through marathon negotiations and blatant horse-trading.

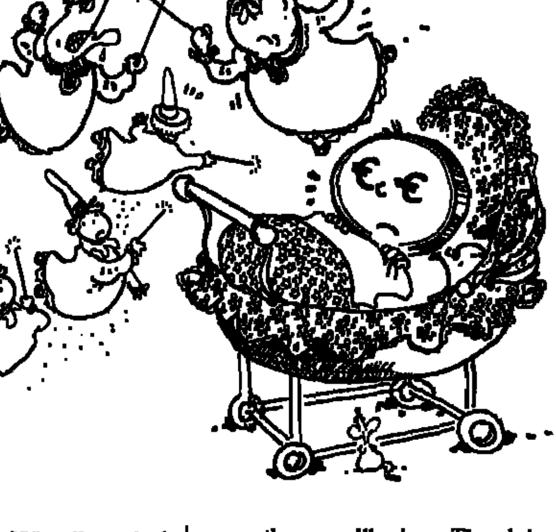
This rather schizophrenic way of proceeding (one step forward, one step sideways) explains why none of the milestones in the construction of the EU has been accompanied by much enthusiasm.

The latest Brussels get-together was no exception to the rule. The Germans wanted the Dutchman, Wim Duisenberg, to hold the presidency of the ECB for the period officially provided for by the Maastricht treaty: eight years. Duisenberg had the backing of the EU countries' central banks.

The French wanted to show clearly that they felt the appointment of one of the most powerful figures on the European monetary scene was something that should be decided not by his peers, but by the European Council of Heads of State and of Government.

To make that point, President Jacques Chirac maintained the candidacy of Jean-Claude Trichet for the post of ECB president even though it meant humiliating the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, the man without whom the euro would never have seen the light of day; even though it had the effect of personally destabilising one of the last great European leaders; even though it provided Kohl's Social-Democrat opponents with ammunition during the run-up to September's elections in Germany; and even though it made the launch of the euro look like some underhand deal, with Duisenberg "pledging" to resign after four years and hand over his job to Trichet.

Such ploys are familiar EU fare. The really significant and essential event that will go down in history is the creation of the euro. The German press has been scathing about the chancellor, and the British papers, on the evidence of the tussle over the ECB, have already claimed that the whole enterprise is doomed.



These responses are wrong. The EU kept to its Brussels deadline. It is going to get a single currency. It will be able to realise its ambition of forming a powerful monetary zone.

To be sure, the euro remains a challenge and its success is not a foregone conclusion. It needs to enable Europe to exert greater control over its monetary future. Although the Eurosceptic camp has a number of perfectly valid arguments, one key point it makes does not stand up — the notion that a country like France will be giving up its monetary sovereignty by adopting the euro. Globalisation has already turned that sovereignty into little more than an illusion. The delegation of power involved in adopting the euro is in fact one way of clawing back a degree of monetary sovereignty.

Let's stop worrying unnecessarily: the demise of the franc will not mean the demise of France. The principle of subsidiarity will ensure that the EU is given only those tasks that it does better than individual nations. The euro is not a blow aimed at the nation state; it is an example of the nation state adapting itself to globalisation. In that sense the Brussels summit, despite all the ructions, served a useful historic purpose.

(May 5)

Romania scandal 'is plot to discredit the president'

Andrei Neacsu in Bucharest

FOR the past few weeks Romania has been in the throes of a serious corruption scandal involving several state institutions. It could well provide President Emil Constantinescu with an opportunity to prove his determination to combat graft and organised crime.

A cigarette smuggling operation carried out during the night of April 16-17 at a military air base near Bucharest demonstrated the vulnerability of the current government, which came to power in November 1996.

On that night 3,000 cases of cigarettes, flown in from Athens by an aircraft chartered by the Bulgarian airline Air Sofia, were unloaded at the military base by hooded men. The operation was supervised by army officers and members of a security service whose tasks include the protection of the president.

The scandal got a new lease of life on May 3, when the deputy commander of that service, Colonel Gheorghe Trutulescu, was arrested after being on the run for several days. Trutulescu, thought to be the mastermind behind the operation, said in an interview given while still on the run that smuggling was rife in Romania. He added that the net profit of $5-6 million per year it generated was used as a secret source of finance for political parties, both the ruling and the opposition, and for the secret services.

Weapons have reportedly also been smuggled. Trutulescu is expected to give evidence that will make it possible to identify the leading political figures involved in the scandal.

While Trutulescu claims to be "no more than a pawn", sources close to Constantinescu claim that it is all part of a plot to discredit the president. "Luckily the plan partly failed — otherwise we would have faced a scandal that would have made Watergate seem like a joke," said the president's chief aide, Zoe Petre.

"We won the elections, but we haven't yet come to power," Constantinescu said at the end of 1997. The president was denouncing corrupt structures within the police, army, customs and civil service that he had inherited from the previous regime. Today "the president has become the prisoner of the men who are supposed to protect him", according to the influential daily Adevarul.

The police and the state prosecutor's office are both convinced that "a mafia group, set up, developed and consolidated over several years, lies behind the case". According to the Romanian internal security service, the smuggling is the work of an international network of traffickers "organised out of Cyprus, Greece and Bulgaria".

International arrest warrants have been issued against a Syrian and an Iraqi implicated in the smuggling, and six other people, including two military officers, have been arrested.

(May 5)

Morocco set to allow exile to return from France

Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

A GREAT wrong has finally been redressed: Abraham Serfaty, deported to France in 1991 after 17 years in a Moroccan jail, is going to be able to return to his country a free man. A minister in Morocco's new centre-left government confirmed to Le Monde that "the case is about to be settled".

This bring to an end one of the darkest episodes in Morocco's history, one that has stigmatised a kingdom that yearns for international respectability. A self-styled "militant Arab-Jew", Serfaty was jailed several times when Morocco was still a French protectorate. In February 1977 a Casablanca appeal court sentenced the co-founder of the far-left movement Ila al Amam to life imprisonment for "plotting to overthrow the monarchy" and "betraying national security". His crime had been his radical stance on the issue of Western Sahara.

Serfaty was tortured for two months, then spent a whole year blindfolded and handcuffed. But he is a tough nut, and soon made life difficult for those who had jailed him. Hunger strikes were followed by newspaper articles and libel actions, from behind bars, against two ministers who had described him respectively as a "privileged prisoner" and "a Zionist".

Serfaty's friends in the outside world began to take action. A leading agitator was Christine Daure, a French teacher, who managed to obtain permission to marry him in prison in 1986.

Their struggle was not in vain. On September 13, 1991, to his great surprise, Serfaty was released and deported to France. At the age of 65 he had recovered his freedom. All that remained for him to do was clear his name. The Rabat authorities had refused to accept that he was a Moroccan citizen. The interior minister, Driss Basri, flying in the face of all the evidence, repeatedly claimed Serfaty was Brazilian.

"It's wonderful to be able to go back to Morocco, to a country that is beginning to move out of a long period of darkness," Serfaty told Le Monde. "It's more than 26 years since I last lived there as a free man, if I count the years I spent underground, in prison and in exile."

The lifting of the ban on Serfaty is the first important decision, at least symbolically, taken by Abderrahmane Youssoufi's government. But it is not the only one. The house arrest imposed since 1989 on another opposition figure, Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, head of a banned Islamist association, is about to be lifted.

The government has also promised to shed light on the fate of hundreds of people who have "disappeared", some of them more than 30 years ago. As the lawyer Abderrahim Berrada puts it: "The state must know what became of them. If they are still alive they should be released; if they are dead, their bodies should be returned."

(May 7)

Basques get caught up in violence

Marie-Claude Decamps in Madrid

SPAIN is caught up in an absurd spiral of violence: no sooner do the police strike a blow against the armed Basque separatist organisation, ETA, than the latter responds with redoubled violence. On May 2 the police arrested six alleged members of the "Donosti commando", one of ETA's most wanted groups. Four days later, Tomas Caballero, a municipal councillor in Pamplona, capital of Navarre, was gunned down in front of his home.

Documents seized in the course of the arrests listed future intended victims, including King Juan Carlos, who survived an assassination attempt in 1995 and against whom a further attempt was to have been made this summer at the inauguration of the San Sebastian Aquarium.

Also in ETA's sights were an aide to the Basque government, Juan Mari Atutxa, and many politicians, most from the conservative People's party (PP) led by the prime minister, José Maria Aznar.

Sixty-three-year-old Caballero was the spokesman in Pamplona for a small regionalist conservative party, the Union of the Navarrese People, allied to the PP. In the past few months ETA has struck at the PP, which refuses to talk to the Basque rebels unless it renounces violence.

Five conservative municipal councillors have been killed since the kidnapping and murder in July 1997 of Miguel Angel Blanco, a councillor whose death triggered huge demonstrations of outrage throughout Spain.

All the political parties except Herri Batasuna (HB), ETA's "political wing", have condemned Caballero's murder. But, irrespective of the repeated appeals to HB to distance itself from ETA, the predominant feeling is one of helplessness at the way the situation in the Basque Country is unable to move forward.

At a time when dialogue seems to be making some headway in Northern Ireland — even though the two situations are not comparable — many people have publicly called for the vicious circle of violence in the Basque Country to be ended. But what can be done? The peace plan proposed by the head of the Basque government, José Antonio Ardanza, was shelved, if not scrapped, by the PP and the Socialists, who found it "unrealistic".

Since then there has been mounting tension between the PP and the leaders of its tactical ally, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). The PNV has accused the Aznar government of "failing to move forward on the issue of peace in the Basque Country out of electoral fear".

On May 6 the interior minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, responded by saying: "ETA has shown its true face, which has not changed: it is a face of death, sorrow and tragedy."

An ominous political climate has been made worse by the prospect of Basque autonomous elections in the autumn, and by the recent revelation that telephones at HB's headquarters in Vitoria were bugged by the military secret service, Cesid.

(May 8)

Corot theft exposes Louvre's vulnerability

Harry Bellet

WHEN Le Chemin de Sèvres, a valuable painting by Camille Corot (1796-1875), was stolen from the Louvre on May 3, the museum's director, Pierre Rosenberg admitted on television that it was "a vulnerable museum".

The 20,000-odd people visiting the museum that Sunday must have felt equally vulnerable: after the theft was discovered, they were kept on the premises for almost three hours and systematically searched by police. Some of them became unwell and had to be taken away in ambulances.

No one saw fit to announce the theft to the museum visitors, who anxiously wondered what could have caused such a crush to form and why they were being prevented from leaving. There were even rumours of a bomb scare.

If the theft had been announced, it would probably have triggered some hilarity, for it seems to have been carried out with ridiculous ease. According to initial reports the thief cut the painting out with a razor blade or Stanley knife and left the stretcher, frame and protective pane of glass where they were.

The museum attendants saw nothing. The Louvre employs some 950 attendants, who work on a rota basis. There are always about 240 of them patrolling the various rooms at any time.

The Corot painting is one of those small-scale landscapes (35x49cm) that make the artist so popular. It is a light-filled, well-balanced composition in which he shows the influence of both 17th century Dutch landscape painters and Claude Lorrain. Such small paintings, which Corot executed from sketches he had drawn in the open air, had considerable influence on the Impressionists, particularly Alfred Sisley.



Stolen . . . Corot's Le Chemin de Sèvres is too well known to have any market value

Le Chemin de Sèvres is too well known to have any market value, and the thief cannot hope to extort money from an insurance company, as works in the French national collections are insured only when they are lent for temporary exhibitions. That does not mean the painting carries no price: a picture of similar size, Les Vaches au Marais, fetched $120,000 in New York last year.

Corot prices have been adversely affected by the incredible number of fakes on the market. As the art historian René Huyghes once quipped: "Corot painted 3,000 paintings, 10,000 of which are in the United States." Corot himself was quite prepared to put his name to pastiches of his work, so that forgers would not risk going to prison.

One can only speculate whether he would have been as indulgent to a thief. But he would probably have excused the visibly shaken Rosenberg, who told viewers with a wry smile: "Thefts from the Louvre are in my view few and far between. But they are inevitable — sadly inevitable."

Few and far between? In July 1994, a pastel by Robert Nanteuil (1623-78), Portrait de Robert Nanteuil, was stolen in broad daylight. The thief removed the screws that secured the portrait and its protective pane of glass to the frame.

Six months later a thief took only five minutes to cut a painting by Lancelot Turpin de Crissé (1782-1859), Daims dans un Paysage, out of its frame, damaging it in the process, and spirit it out of the museum.

A week later the Louvre suffered another theft, which was accompanied by an act of vandalism: a halberd, 112cm long and weighing 17kg, was wrenched from a 17th century bronze sculpture. The thief had no difficulty in smuggling it out of the museum. Following an anonymous telephone call it was found near the Louvre's entrance.

In December 1997 security guards discovered that a Sumerian statuette dating from 2450 BC had been decapitated. A month later a marble votive offering to Zeus Meilichios dating from the 4th century BC was stolen.

So when will it be the Mona Lisa's turn? If it goes, it will not be for the first time: the painting was stolen in 1911. It was found two years later, at the home of a house painter called Vicenzo Perrugia, who had smuggled it out under his overall. A fervent Italian patriot, he had hoped to return the painting to its country of origin — and pocket an $80,000 commission in the process.

(May 5)

Luminous ambition

Pierre Gervasoni

THE Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, under Marek Janowski, is probably the only Paris orchestra capable of offering an invitation to explore 20th century music as alluring as the programme it performed at the Maison de Radio France on April 28.

It combined a work by a recognised master (Alban Berg) with a highly uncharacteristic composition by a fellow Schoenbergian (Anton Webern) and two little-played masterpieces by one of their most independent-minded successors (Bernd Alois Zimmermann).

But a remarkable programme of that kind is not necessarily a guarantee of excellence. The performance at the Maison de Radio France, which closed its "20th century: traditions and modernity" season, more than lived up to its didactic promise; it left a lasting emotional impact on the minds of all those who heard it live.

Photoptosis ("the penetration of light" in Greek) is not the most often performed of Zimmermann's works. Composed in 1968, two years before he committed suicide at the age of 52, it is an orchestral prelude that makes heavy demands, from both a logistic and a performing point of view, and forces conductors to think twice before taking it on.

Secure in the knowledge that he had a fully committed orchestra (he will remain its musical director until 2000), Janowski enthusiastically embraced the luminous ambitions of Photoptosis, which was inspired by the open-air monochromes that Yves Klein painted for the Gelsenkirchen Theatre. The pointillist touches of the composition eventually metamorphosed into ambiguous glints and blinding flashes of light that led up to a final all-consuming crescendo.

The core of Zimmermann's magnificent Trumpet Concerto is a celebrated negro spiritual, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See". The trumpet soloist, Hakan Hardenberger, expertly coaxed the musicians out of their traditional reserve then demurely effaced himself behind the pall of melancholy that is intrinsic to negro spirituals.

An outstanding virtuoso, for whom such prestigious contemporary composers as György Ligeti and Hans Werner Henze have written works, the young Swede treated himself to an encore — Rogers and Hart's My Funny Valentine — that epitomised his great quality: an irresistible naturalness.

After the interval, Webern and Berg were given deeply felt performances. Im Sommerwind, written by the 21-year-old Webern in 1904 when he was still far from being avant-garde, is a very *fin de siècle* idyll. Under Janowski's nimble baton the work was shorn of the pathos of its Straussian and Wagnerian models.

As for the three fragments from Wozzeck, they displayed the essential qualities of Berg's wonderful opera: instrumental perspective and vocal directness.

(May 5)

The secret author of O

OBITUARY
Dominique Aury

DOMINIQUE Aury, who died last month, was a quiet, frail woman who for more than 40 years was secretary-general of the prestigious literary magazine Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF). But she was also a key figure in one of the great literary mysteries of the second half of the 20th century — that surrounding Pauline Réage's Histoire d'O (Story Of O), probably the most celebrated of modern erotic novels.

When it came out in 1954 the book got into trouble with the censors and the guardians of morality. Just Jaeckin's conformist and somewhat preposterous screen adaptation of Histoire d'O in 1975 got a lot of flak from certain feminists, who wanted a ban put on what they described as a "degrading representation of women", and also attacked the book.

Aury turned out to be the key to a mystery that was finally solved — or at least so it is thought — only in 1994, when the New Yorker revealed that Pauline Réage, whose identity had been the subject of speculation for 50 years, was in fact Aury.

Despite this admission the book's publisher, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, refused to confirm the news, saying that he had received no instructions from the author of Histoire d'O to reveal his or her identity. However, those with an interest in literature, particularly in France, considered that Réage's identity had long been known, despite Aury's polite denials.

She had been secretary-general of the NRF for just one year — and was known to be the lover of Jean Paulhan, the magazine's editor — when Pauvert published Histoire d'O, with a preface by Paulhan, who was well known for his interest in the Marquis de Sade.

Paulhan was immediately suspected of having himself written the book, which describes the kicks a young woman gets out of being whipped and chained up. Yet some claimed the author was Aury, since Pauline Réage was only one letter short of being an anagram of "Egérie Paulhan" (Paulhan's inspiration).

But soon it was the issue of censorship rather than the book's authorship that began to exercise the minds of those who saw Histoire d'O as a salutary act of literary and moral freedom. It won the Deux Magots prize in 1955, but was seized in several countries.

For years the book was not allowed to be displayed or advertised, but it sold very well under the counter. It was translated into many languages and eventually became an erotic literary classic.

Réage spoke out on one or two occasions, notably in an interview with Régine Deforges, O m'a Dit: Entretiens Avec Pauline Réage (1995). But Aury herself went on record only in 1994, at the age of 86, when, in an interview with the New Yorker, she said Histoire d'O had been written as "a love letter to Jean Paulhan". She was, she said, neither young nor pretty, so she had to find other weapons. Paulhan had told her he thought she was incapable of writing a book like that. She replied that she could always try.

Aury . . . wrote erotic classic

The following year, in an interview with Le Monde, Aury discussed the relationship that existed in her mind between "O and the mystics", which she defined as "pure love": "Are we to assume that love turns one into a slave? Obviously. If one is not a slave, it can't be very serious . . . It's a way of losing oneself, of abandoning oneself, a way of being delivered."

The remarks must have come as a surprise to those who thought the woman they knew was no more than a respectable member of the Prix Fémina jury (since 1963), a stout defender of Gallimard authors, a member of that publishing house's reading panel since 1950, a "woman of letters" in the old sense, a translator of many English works, the editor of Paulhan's correspondence, and the author of, among other things, Anthologie de la Poésie Religieuse (1943) and a collection of essays, Lectures Pour Tous (1958).

She was working as a journalist on Les Lettres Françaises when, just after the end of the war, Paulhan invited her into what she regarded as "the Holy of Holies", "to become first an editor on Les Cahiers de la Pléiade, then secretary-general of the NRF".

When Antoine Gallimard took over the family firm in 1988 he symbolically moved into the NRF's office. But no one in the past decade succeeded in making the magazine anything more than a pale relic of the past — from which Aury's name was discourteously removed.

Aury often recalled Paulhan's attitude, as though hoping it would serve as a model for the future: "What was striking was his openness to everything. He read everything, answered everything. On Wednesdays, he would see anyone who turned up."

Josyane Savigneau

Dominique Aury, born September 23, 1907; died April 27, 1998

(May 3-4)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Clinton Set for Confrontation With Israel

COMMENT
Barton Gellman

ON THE short list of foreign policies bearing President Clinton's personal stamp, the role of peace broker in the Middle East ranks near the top. Clinton's encompassing embrace of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat at the White House on the day they reached mutual recognition in 1993 was an emotional high point of his first term. The president wept two years later at news of Rabin's slaying. According to advisers, Clinton can game out the votes inside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's intricate governing coalition as well as any congressional roll call.

Now Clinton's relationship with Israel has reached a turning point. After months of worrying that the peace talks were near collapse — and assigning Netanyahu, in private, the lion's share of the blame — the president and his senior advisers have set a reluctant course of confrontation with Israel's premier.

For several reasons — temperament and politics among them, but also to protect an opening for Netanyahu to back down — Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright are speaking softly of the test of wills. But senior aides to both of them insist that the administration is prepared to turn the heat up if Netanyahu continues to resist U.S. proposals to break the impasse in his talks with Arafat.

Albright had set Monday as the deadline for Netanyahu to agree to the American package, which calls for an Israeli withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank. Otherwise, she said, "we will have to reexamine our approach to the peace process."

Backing that threat, according to administration officials, is a presidential decision authorizing Albright to make a blunt speech describing the American proposals and declaring an end to active U.S. mediation until Israel, like the Palestinians, accepts them.

"The president feels very strongly that the peace process is one of the biggest priorities in his administration. He's prepared to do everything he can to get this process going again, and that includes taking a little heat," said one senior official.

Clinton never sought confrontation with Israel, and political advisers to Vice President Al Gore are anxious about it in light of the outsized influence of American Jews on Democratic Party politics and political spending. But the White House sees even greater risks in the deadlock that led Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk to testify last month that "the strategic window for peacemaking is now closing."

Israeli police stand guard as a Palestinian argues with rightwing Jewish seminary students outside a home in Arab East Jerusalem they took over after a student was stabbed to death last week PHOTO: DAVID SILVERMAN

"There's a very real danger that acts of violence will escalate and produce a breakdown in the whole [peace] process," said one official. "It is in both Israel's interest and U.S. regional interests that we avoid that explosion."

The reference to American interests is the key to understanding Clinton's behavior, according to some officials. As the peace talks have declined, officials said, so has American influence in the Middle East and so too have the fortunes of local leaders — in Egypt, Jordan, North Africa and the Persian Gulf — who allied themselves with the United States.

Clinton long asserted that the United States wished only to be a "facilitator" for talks between Israelis and Palestinians. But that role shifted dramatically within six months of Netanyahu's election in 1996.

Clinton's special envoy to the Middle East, Dennis Ross, and his team have tried to broker a way out of the impasse to the final chapter of peace talks that were supposed to have started the same month Netanyahu ascended to power.

In January, conscious of the implications of committing the prestige of his office, Clinton invited Netanyahu and Arafat for intensive discussions of U.S. "ideas" to break their deadlock. The administration still sought to avoid the appearance of having drafted a U.S. peace plan, but that was in effect what it had become.

Clinton hoped, one official said, that "if the parties would not respond to each other, they would respond to us." When that did not happen, the administration began planning to raise the stakes.

Arafat, who did not like the U.S. plan at first, became more amenable as the depth of Netanyahu's resistance emerged. The Clinton administration recruited Egyptian, Jordanian and European help to persuade Arafat to sign on, intending to step up pressure on Netanyahu by casting him as the lone holdout against his country's principal ally.

Struggling to reduce the U.S. 13 percent demand, Netanyahu wrote to Clinton on March 10 with an offer to give up far less land — about 9 percent — but to choose places that would increase the connections between existing islands of Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank. The two men spoke by telephone that week, and Clinton refused to budge.

When Albright first made her London remarks last week, according to Israeli officials, Netanyahu was at first inclined to accept the invitation to Washington and the American plan that went with it. But by Thursday last week, one Israeli said, "things were starting to turn."

One major factor was Netanyahu's infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, a formidable patron of West Bank settlers who was visiting Washington when Albright held her news conference in London. Suspecting that the prime minister might accept Clinton's deal, Sharon tracked down colleagues around the world to rally them behind a vote of defiance.

In Israel, as his cabinet hardened, so did Netanyahu's denunciation of "dictates" from the United States. But Clinton administration officials professed to be unimpressed.

"One of the criteria by which the public in Israel judges a prime minister is how they manage U.S.-Israeli relations, and I'm not sure [Netanyahu is] ready to pay the price of an open rift," said one Clinton adviser.

With both men increasingly committed to the fight, it grew harder by last weekend to see how either could finesse their dispute.

One well-known American Jewish leader, insisting on anonymity, asked: "Will Netanyahu bow to Clinton's iron will, in which case the United States is going to be in a completely different role in the Middle East? Or will Netanyahu stand up to the president of the United States, impairing his relations with his principal ally but demonstrating to the world that the government of Israel is a sovereign state and makes its own decisions? That's what we're going to find out, and we're going to pay a very high price for this little research."

Importance Of Treaty to End Bribery

EDITORIAL

HOW'S THIS for a level playing field? U.S. law bans the bribery of foreign officials to win business contracts; French law makes such bribes tax-deductible. For years, the United States has been urging other industrialized countries to erase this discrepancy — to outlaw foreign bribery, as has U.S. law for more than two decades. Now Congress has a chance to help make that happen.

The instrument at hand is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, which 33 leading developed nations signed last December. Once the treaty goes into effect, every participating country will criminalize bribery of foreign officials. In some ways, the treaty doesn't go as far as the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act nor as far as U.S. negotiators would have liked. It doesn't ban payments to political parties or candidates, for example. But it's a huge first step, and other nations have agreed to discuss extending its reach once this treaty goes into effect.

Exactly 10 years ago Congress instructed the executive branch to seek just such a treaty. The only question is whether the Senate will find time to vote on it, and whether both houses of Congress will find time to pass the necessary legislation before everyone goes home to campaign. But timing is urgent. The signatories promised maximum effort to ratify by the end of this year. Any delay here would only give other countries an excuse to deviate from that schedule.

But in developing nations, and those making a transition from communism to free market, corruption can have an especially debilitating effect. Such countries often lack established courts and law-enforcement institutions to keep bribery in check. It's important that all developed countries recognize, as the US has since 1977, that they have a responsibility to help fight such destructive dishonesty. And once the treaty comes into force, European bribes will not only no longer be legal — they won't be tax-deductible, either.

Extremist Violence Surges in Germany

William Drozdiak in Berlin

THE GERMAN government reported last week that racist and anti-semitic attacks by right-wing extremists surged by nearly a third in the past year, underscoring fears that far-right violence is again becoming a serious problem, especially in the eastern part of the country.

A report by Germany's internal security service said acts of violence by far-right groups, which had subsided in previous years after a police crackdown, were rising dramatically and could soon pose a threat to public order.

"It is a discouraging development," Interior Minister Manfred Kanther said at a news conference. "We have to remain on alert. We will fight extremists on the far right, as well as on the far left, without any letup at all, and we will win."

German officials said high unemployment, which at 25 percent is more than double the national average, is the main factor contributing to the rise of right-wing extremism in the six states that once formed communist East Germany. Besides the increasing violence, political support is also rising there for such far-right groups as the German People's Union, which captured 13 percent of the vote in recent elections in Saxony-Anhalt.

Bernd Wagner, a social researcher who has studied right-wing groups in eastern Germany, said that at least 30 percent of young people under the age of 25 hold extremist attitudes. He said that peer pressure, alcoholism and the bleak employment outlook were fortifying the growth of far-right groups that want to expel the 7 million foreigners who live in Germany — a higher number than anywhere else in Europe.

Following a series of firebombings targeting asylum-seekers that killed more than 30 people after German unification eight years ago, the government clamped down on xenophobic violence. As a result, the number of right-wing criminal acts dropped substantially through 1996.

But last year, the number of racist and anti-semitic acts of violence jumped by 27 percent to 790, which included 13 cases of attempted manslaughter. Nearly half the attacks took place in the eastern states. There were 11,000 other offenses by right-wing elements that included the dissemination of outlawed extremist propaganda or the use of illegal symbols, such as the swastika.

The report also concluded that the number of right-wing radicals in Germany rose by 7 percent to 48,400 and the number of hard-core extremists who are deemed capable of committing acts of violence climbed 19 percent to 7,600.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 17 1998

Corot theft exposes Louvre's vulnerability

Harry Bellet

WHEN Le Chemin de Sèvres, a valuable painting by Camille Corot (1796-1875), was stolen from the Louvre on May 3, the museum's director, Pierre Rosenberg admitted on television that it was "a vulnerable museum".

The 20,000-odd people visiting the museum that Sunday must have felt equally vulnerable: after the theft was discovered, they were kept on the premises for almost three hours and systematically searched by police. Some of them became unwell and had to be taken away in ambulances.

No one saw fit to announce the theft to the museum visitors, who anxiously wondered what could have caused such a crush to form and why they were being prevented from leaving. There were even rumours of a bomb scare.



Stolen . . . Corot's Le Chemin de Sèvres is too well known to have any market value

If the theft had been announced, it would probably have triggered some hilarity, for it seems to have been carried out with ridiculous ease. According to initial reports the thief cut the painting out with a razor blade or Stanley knife and left the stretcher, frame and protective pane of glass where they were.

The museum attendants saw nothing. The Louvre employs some 950 attendants, who work on a rota basis. There are always about 240 of them patrolling the various rooms at any time.

The Corot painting is one of those small-scale landscapes (35x49cm) that make the artist so popular. It is a light-filled, well-balanced composition in which he shows the influence of both 17th century Dutch landscape painters and Claude Lorrain. Such small paintings, which Corot executed from sketches he had drawn in the open air, had considerable influence on the Impressionists, particularly Alfred Sisley.

Le Chemin de Sèvres is too well known to have any market value, and the thief cannot hope to extort money from an insurance company, as works in the French national collections are insured only when they are lent for temporary exhibitions. That does not mean the painting carries no price: a picture of similar size, Les Vaches au Marais, fetched $120,000 in New York last year.

Corot prices have been adversely affected by the incredible number of fakes on the market. As the art historian René Huyghes once quipped: "Corot painted 3,000 paintings, 10,000 of which are in the United States." Corot himself was quite prepared to put his name to pastiches of his work, so that forgers would not risk going to prison.

One can only speculate whether he would have been as indulgent to a thief. But he would probably have excused the visibly shaken Rosenberg, who told viewers with a wry smile: "Thefts from the Louvre are in my view few and far between. But they are inevitable — sadly inevitable."

Few and far between? In July 1994, a pastel by Robert Nanteuil (1623-78), Portrait de Robert Nanteuil, was stolen in broad daylight. The thief removed the screws that secured the portrait and its protective pane of glass to the frame.

Six months later a thief took only five minutes to cut a painting by Lancelot Turpin de Crissé (1782-1859), Daims dans un Paysage, out of its frame, damaging it in the process, and spirit it out of the museum.

A week later the Louvre suffered another theft, which was accompanied by an act of vandalism: a halberd, 112cm long and weighing 17kg, was wrenched from a 17th century bronze sculpture. The thief had no difficulty in smuggling it out of the museum. Following an anonymous telephone call it was found near the Louvre's entrance.

In December 1997 security guards discovered that a Sumerian statuette dating from 2450 BC had been decapitated. A month later a marble votive offering to Zeus Meilichios dating from the 4th century BC was stolen.

So when will it be the Mona Lisa's turn? If it goes, it will not be for the first time: the painting was stolen in 1911. It was found two years later, at the home of a house painter called Vicenzo Perrugia, who had smuggled it out under his overall. A fervent Italian patriot, he had hoped to return the painting to its country of origin — and pocket an $80,000 commission in the process.

(May 5)

Luminous ambition

Pierre Gervasoni

THE Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France, under Marek Janowski, is probably the only Paris orchestra capable of offering an invitation to explore 20th century music as alluring as the programme it performed at the Maison de Radio France on April 28.

It combined a work by a recognised master (Alban Berg) with a highly uncharacteristic composition by a fellow Schoenbergian (Anton Webern) and two little-played masterpieces by one of their most independent-minded successors (Bernd Alois Zimmermann).

But a remarkable programme of that kind is not necessarily a guarantee of excellence. The performance at the Maison de Radio France, which closed its "20th century: traditions and modernity" season, more than lived up to its didactic promise; it left a lasting emotional impact on the minds of all those who heard it live.

Photoptosis ("the penetration of light" in Greek) is not the most often performed of Zimmermann's works. Composed in 1968, two years before he committed suicide at the age of 52, it is an orchestral prelude that makes heavy demands, from both a logistic and a performing point of view, and forces conductors to think twice before taking it on.

Secure in the knowledge that he had a fully committed orchestra (he will remain its musical director until 2000), Janowski enthusiastically embraced the luminous ambitions of Photoptosis, which was inspired by the open-air monochromes that Yves Klein painted for the Gelsenkirchen Theatre. The pointillist touches of the composition eventually metamorphosed into ambiguous glints and blinding flashes of light that led up to a final all-consuming crescendo.

The core of Zimmermann's magnificent Trumpet Concerto is a celebrated negro spiritual, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See". The trumpet soloist, Hakan Hardenberger, expertly coaxed the musicians out of their traditional reserve then demurely effaced himself behind the pall of melancholy that is intrinsic to negro spirituals.

An outstanding virtuoso, for whom such prestigious contemporary composers as György Ligeti and Hans Werner Henze have written works, the young Swede treated himself to an encore — Rogers and Hart's My Funny Valentine — that epitomised his great quality: an irresistible naturalness.

After the interval, Webern and Berg were given deeply felt performances. Im Sommerwind, written by the 21-year-old Webern in 1904 when he was still far from being avant-garde, is a very *fin de siècle* idyll. Under Janowski's nimble baton the work was shorn of the pathos of its Straussian and Wagnerian models.

As for the three fragments from Wozzeck, they displayed the essential qualities of Berg's wonderful opera: instrumental perspective and vocal directness.

(May 5)

The secret author of O

OBITUARY
Dominique Aury

DOMINIQUE Aury, who died last month, was a quiet, frail woman who for more than 40 years was secretary-general of the prestigious literary magazine Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF). But she was also a key figure in one of the great literary mysteries of the second half of the 20th century — that surrounding Pauline Réage's Histoire d'O (Story Of O), probably the most celebrated of modern erotic novels.

When it came out in 1954 the book got into trouble with the censors and the guardians of morality. Just Jaeckin's conformist and somewhat preposterous screen adaptation of Histoire d'O in 1975 got a lot of flak from certain feminists, who wanted a ban put on what they described as a "degrading representation of women", and also attacked the book.

Aury turned out to be the key to a mystery that was finally solved — or at least so it is thought — only in 1994, when the New Yorker revealed that Pauline Réage, whose identity had been the subject of speculation for 50 years, was in fact Aury.

Despite this admission the book's publisher, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, refused to confirm the news, saying that he had received no instructions from the author of Histoire d'O to reveal his or her identity. However, those with an interest in literature, particularly in France, considered that Réage's identity had long been known, despite Aury's polite denials.

She had been secretary-general of the NRF for just one year — and was known to be the lover of Jean Paulhan, the magazine's editor — when Pauvert published Histoire d'O, with a preface by Paulhan, who was well known for his interest in the Marquis de Sade.

Paulhan was immediately suspected of having himself written the book, which describes the kicks a young woman gets out of being whipped and chained up. Yet some claimed the author was Aury, since Pauline Réage was only one letter short of being an anagram of "Egérie Paulhan" (Paulhan's inspiration).

But soon it was the issue of censorship rather than the book's authorship that began to exercise the minds of those who saw Histoire d'O as a salutary act of literary and moral freedom. It won the Deux Magots prize in 1955, but was seized in several countries.

For years the book was not allowed to be displayed or advertised, but it sold very well under the counter. It was translated into many languages and eventually became an erotic literary classic.

Réage spoke out on one or two occasions, notably in an interview with Régine Deforges, O m'a Dit: Entretiens Avec Pauline Réage (1995). But Aury herself went on record only in 1994, at the age of 86, when, in an interview with the New Yorker, she said Histoire d'O had been written as "a love letter to Jean Paulhan". She was, she said, neither young nor pretty, so she had to find other weapons. Paulhan had told her he thought she was incapable of writing a book like that. She replied that she could always try.



Aury . . . wrote erotic classic

The following year, in an interview with Le Monde, Aury discussed the relationship that existed in her mind between "O and the mystics", which she defined as "pure love": "Are we to assume that love turns one into a slave? Obviously. If one is not a slave, it can't be very serious . . . It's a way of losing oneself, of abandoning oneself; a way of being delivered."

The remarks must have come as a surprise to those who thought the woman they knew was no more than a respectable member of the Prix Femina jury (since 1963), a stout defender of Gallimard authors, a member of that publishing house's reading panel since 1950, a "woman of letters" in the old sense, a translator of many English works, the editor of Paulhan's correspondence, and the author of, among other things, Anthologie de la Poésie Religieuse (1943) and a collection of essays, Lectures Pour Tous (1958).

She was working as a journalist on Les Lettres Françaises when, just after the end of the war, Paulhan invited her into what she regarded as "the Holy of Holies", "to become first an editor on Les Cahiers de la Pléiade, then secretary-general of the NRF".

When Antoine Gallimard took over the family firm in 1988 he symbolically moved into the NRF's office. But no one in the past decade succeeded in making the magazine anything more than a pale relic of the past — from which Aury's name was discourteously removed.

Aury often recalled Paulhan's attitude, as though hoping it would serve as a model for the future: "What was striking was his openness to everything. He read everything, answered everything. On Wednesdays, he would see anyone who turned up."

Josyane Savigneau

Dominique Aury, born September 23, 1907; died April 27, 1998
(May 3-4)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 17 1998

Clinton Set for Confrontation With Israel

COMMENT
Barton Gellman

ON THE short list of foreign policies bearing President Clinton's personal stamp, the role of peace broker in the Middle East ranks near the top. Clinton's encompassing embrace of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat at the White House on the day they reached mutual recognition in 1993 was an emotional high point of his first term. The president wept two years later at news of Rabin's slaying. According to advisers, Clinton can game out the votes inside Prime Minister Benjamim Netanyahu's intricate governing coalition as well as any congressional roll call.

Now Clinton's relationship with Israel has reached a turning point. After months of worrying that the peace talks were near collapse — and assigning Netanyahu, in private, the lion's share of the blame — the president and his senior advisers have set a reluctant course of confrontation with Israel's premier.

For several reasons — temperament and politics among them, but also to protect an opening for Netanyahu to back down — Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright are speaking softly of the test of wills. But senior aides to both of them insist that the administration is prepared to turn the heat up if Netanyahu continues to resist U.S. proposals to break the impasse in his talks with Arafat.

Albright had set Monday as the deadline for Netanyahu to agree to the American package, which calls for an Israeli withdrawal from 13 percent of the West Bank. Otherwise, she said, "we will have to reexamine our approach to the peace process."

Backing that threat, according to administration officials, is a presidential decision authorizing Albright to make a blunt speech describing the American proposals and declaring an end to active U.S. mediation until Israel, like the Palestinians, accepts them.

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Israeli police stand guard as a Palestinian argues with rightwing Jewish seminary students outside a home in Arab East Jerusalem they took over after a student was stabbed to death last week PHOTO: DAVID SILVERMAN

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In January, conscious of the implications of committing the prestige of his office, Clinton invited Netanyahu and Arafat for intensive discussions of U.S. "ideas" to break their deadlock. The administration still sought to avoid the appearance of having drafted a U.S. peace plan, but that was in effect what it had become.

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One major factor was Netanyahu's infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, a formidable patron of West Bank settlers who was visiting Washington when Albright held her news conference in London. Suspecting that the prime minister might accept Clinton's deal, Sharon tracked down colleagues around the world to rally them behind a vote of defiance.

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EDITORIAL

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William Drozdiak in Berlin

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German officials said high unemployment, which at 25 percent is more than double the national average, is the main factor contributing to the rise of right-wing extremism in the six states that once formed communist East Germany. Besides the increasing violence, political support is also rising there for such far-right groups as the German People's Union, which captured 13 percent of the vote in recent elections in Saxony-Anhalt.

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Kosovo Requires a Clear-Cut Decision

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

POLITICIANS and diplomats abhor the clear-cut choices posed in the old slogan that commands them to lead, follow, or get out of the way. But America's meandering approach toward the incipient civil war in Serbia's southern province of Kosovo must now give way to such clarity.

The Clinton administration has been chasing a diplomatic will-o'-the-wisp by making unity with its chief European allies and Russia the basis for dealing with Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic on Kosovo. That strategy has enabled Milosevic to play the allies against Washington and to buy time. If continued, this approach will earn the United States a share of the blame for a human tragedy-in-waiting.

The six-month-long U.S. pursuit of the illusion of unity fizzled out in Rome last week, when Russia made clear at a meeting of the six-nation Contact Group that it will not join in putting any significant financial or military pressure on Milosevic over an "internal matter."

Kosovo is not Bosnia redux. It is in many ways far more complicated.

In Bosnia, the need for and probable form of American military intervention were clear from the outset of that conflict: Force could be effective to shore up the internationally recognized frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its central government in the wake of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The callous rejection by George Bush and the long dithering by Bill Clinton that delayed the use of American force in Bosnia exacerbated the costs there.

In the Kosovo crisis, the internationally recognized frontier belongs to Milosevic. Kosovo is historically part of Serbia, which with the Republic of Montenegro forms the present truncated Yugoslavia.

The United States has told its allies, and Milosevic, that it agrees that any final settlement has to include Kosovo remaining part of Yugoslavia. But Washington does not have a view on whether Kosovo should remain a province within Serbia, or become the third republic of Yugoslavia. That is a matter for negotiations between Milosevic and the Kosovars, who must in any event be granted significant autonomy, says the Clinton national security team.

There is a characteristic Clintonian bit of something for everyone in this approach. The one thing it does not contain is a U.S. goal that can be furthered by the use of force — or the threat of force — in Kosovo.

Strategic bombing is not an instrument for promoting autonomy. Neither is a unilateral deployment of the large peacekeeping force that would be needed to keep Kosovo calm.

Kosovo now becomes much more Chechnya than Bosnia. Milosevic will no doubt play Boris Yeltsin, using indiscriminate force to temporarily maintain a fictional national unity before having to grant the province's 90 percent ethnic Albanian population the autonomy that many Kosovars now seek through peaceful means. The human cost will be enormous, the strategic risks great.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has suggested the United States will walk away from the "lowest common denominator" diplomacy the Europeans and Russians pursue on Kosovo and look for new ways to coerce Milosevic. But she has not presented any convincing alternative.

Following the Europeans on security is not an option the administration has been willing to consider seriously, as protracted wrangling over NATO command arrangements shows. Under Clinton, leading on issues of war and peace is an uncertain thing, as the case of Iraq shows.

That leaves the [illegible] intellectually [illegible] out of the war [illegible] Belgrade and Kosovo [illegible] simultaneously Yugoslav [illegible] ial integrity and Kosovars sta[illegible]

As difficult as [illegible] would [illegible] distance would be better than [illegible] inconsistent meddlesome approach of the first years of Bosnia. It would at least bring home faster to the Europeans that their goals of territorial integrity and stability are becoming more incompatible with each passing d[illegible]


Ethnic Albanians demonstrate in Pristina last week against Belgrade's rule

Argentina Confronts Its Nazi Links

Anthony Faiola
In Santa Teresita

THE UNASSUMING red brick house in this resort town near the Atlantic coast does not look like the home of a monster. But the 76-year-old grandfather who was hauled out his front door with a grin on his face this month is believed to be the same man who was boss of Croatia's most notorious fascist death camp, where as many as 600,000 Jews, Gypsies and Serbs were killed during World War II.

Dinko Sakic, reputed to be one of the most infamous war criminals from World War II still living, boldly revealed his identity on national television here last month. And now, his arrest by Argentine authorities after an extradition request from Croatia has sent a shock through Argentina and beyond.

In the same region where such Hitler henchmen as Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie once found safe haven and where countless films speculated about long-lost Nazis in hiding, Sakic's discovery — coupled with other revelations — has underscored the reality that the malignant Nazi chapter in South America's Southern Cone is anything but closed.

Sakic rose quickly through the military ranks of Croatia's World War II-era government, a Nazi puppet regime under the fascist Ustashe movement. In 1944, at age 21, he was named commander of the notorious Jasenovac camp, where hundreds of thousands of prisoners were tortured and killed. Sakic reportedly favored a welder's blowtorch over more conventional weapons.

As stunning as Sakic's discovery is, there is growing evidence that he is hardly the last of his kind. The Argentine government has released its first comprehensive report of Nazi activity here. Among other findings, it shows that other notorious war criminals — including Erich Mueller, one of Hitler's top propaganda officials, and Friedrich Rauch, an infamous member of the SS — may still be hiding in Argentina.

Concern over the presence of fascist war criminals in this region is nothing new. Argentina, along with its neighbors, has long been accused of actively protecting Nazis. The difference now is that many nations — including Chile and Brazil, as well as Argentina — finally appear willing to confront the lingering and long-hidden Nazi issue.

Brazil and Argentina have created special commissions designed to root out Nazi loot brought here during and after World War II. And last week, the Argentine government announced it would form a unique Nazi-hunting office to perform a job that regional police departments, which have been historically anti-semitic, have been reluctant to do.

"I think our decision to go after these men shows that we are willing to correct the errors of our past," said Victor Ramos, head of the Argentine Interior Ministry's Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism.

The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center has produced a study indicating there may be as many as 25 other Nazi criminals still living comfortably, secret lives in Argentina or other parts of South America — far more than most government estimates.

There is also mounting evidence to suggest anti-Nazi efforts here are causing a backlash. The National Socialist Party — in effect, heirs to the Nazi Party — recently announced its decision to hold an international convention in Santiago, Chile, in two years.

Meanwhile, neo-Nazi violence in the region is on the rise. During one notable trial two weeks ago, the parents of an Argentine neo-Nazi youth accused of assaulting a teen-ager he believed to be Jewish got up from their courtroom seats and screamed, "Burn the Jews!"

Earlier this year, dozens of Jewish graves were desecrated in the province of Buenos Aires — an act widely believed to have been committed by off-duty policemen. Meanwhile, no one has been jailed so far in the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy and the 1994 bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires.

In southern Chile, authorities have been trying for two years to arrest Paul Schaefer, a former Nazi corporal who started a religious cult town the size of Washington, after the war.

"The Nazi issue is still alive in South America, and as much as we want to forget it, it's something that we have got to aggressively face if it is to be finally stamped out," said Ricardo Brodsky, secretary general of the Party for Democracy, part of Chile's coalition government. The Chilean Congress, he said, is considering legislation to ban the National Socialist convention.

Sakic and his wife came to Argentina during the rule of President Juan Domingo Peron, who opened the country's doors to more than 50,000 Germans, Croatians and others following Hitler's fall. "Buenos Aires was the base for fleeing Nazis and Nazi sympathizers," said Sergio Widder, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Argentina branch. "They may not all have stayed here, but this was their point of entry."

'Slaver' Gets 14 Years

Blaine Harden in New York

A DICKENSIAN tale of deaf and mute immigrants smuggled into the United States and forced into slavery concluded last week when the head of the alien smuggling ring, herself deaf and mute, was sentenced to 14 years in prison and ordered to pay $1 million in restitution to 50 of her victims.

The victims were illegal Mexican immigrants who for nearly five years sold trinkets on New York subways and who were sometimes tortured with electric stun guns unless they met sales quotas. They remain in detention in a motel in the borough of Queens. They have 11 children with them, including three born in detention.

The federal government has suggested the victims might be given special visas to stay in the United States. A federal judge in Brooklyn ordered that the destitute aliens divide the $1 million restitution payment, with most of them receiving $10,000 to $25,000. Seventeen other defendants have pleaded guilty and many will likely be ordered to pay restitution also.

The alien smuggling ring, which also had operations in Chicago and Los Angeles, was exposed last July when four deaf Mexicans walked into a Queens police station and managed to communicate that they were being forced to work for no pay and were subject to frequent physical abuse.

The acknowledged leader of the ring is Adriana Paoletti Lemus, 29, who last December pleaded guilty to operating a slave trade, money laundering, alien smuggling and obstruction of justice. She has said her workers often were jolted with electricity — on her orders — when they did not meet their $600-a-week sales quotas.

Lemus is one of three children — all of them deaf — in a Mexico City family that federal officials say ran a trinket-peddling business in Mexico for decades. The family business shifted to the United States in the early 1990s, officials say, as Lemus and her two brothers funneled an estimated $4 million south to their parents. Federal officials are trying to extradite the father from Mexico, while the mother, who turned state's evidence against Lemus, was sentenced here last week on lesser charges.

Speaking through a sign-language interpreter, Lemus asked U.S. District Court Judge Nina Gershon for leniency "because I have children ... and I want to see them."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Leslie Cornfeld argued that Lemus' appeal for leniency rang false because she had not seen her children in the eight months before discovery of the smuggling ring, leaving them with relatives in Mexico.

Lemus had told the court she is destitute, but the judge found that claim "not to be supported by the facts." The judge ordered her to pay the full $1 million restitution by October 1.

The U.S. government is "aggressively pursuing" bank accounts held in Mexico in Lemus' name and in the names of other defendants due to be sentenced shortly, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

Prescription for a Better Life

The aging U.S. population is finding a panacea in a new wave of pills, writes Justin Gillis

FIND a sympathetic doctor these days and head down to the corner drugstore with a few prescriptions in hand, and you can walk out with a sack of goodies that promise to make life better.

There's Propecia, a $50-a-month treatment to make a balding man's hair grow back. There's a prescription cream called Retin-A to make wrinkles fade. There's Prozac for positive thinking and a new drug that can make folks thinner.

And now, of course, there is Viagra, an impotence treatment that some urologists believe will make sex better even for men who aren't impotent. For that matter, it may make sex better for women who take it.

This is the new frontier of drug development: quality-of-life pharmacology. The products on the market now are merely the first wave. In the laboratories of the nation's drug and biotechnology companies, a dazzling array of new treatments are under development.

Taking advantage of growing knowledge of the body's elementary processes, scientists at these companies think they'll be able to restore joints damaged by arthritis, reset the body's "set point" to banish flab, grow new blood vessels to replace ones that clog up, stop age-related degeneration of the eyes and bones. In short, they hope to keep people looking and feeling vigorous well into the decades that used to be regarded as old age.

Among scientists there isn't much question that a lot of this will happen — the only real question is how soon.

"Where all this technology is taking us is into a series of qualitative improvements in people's lives," said William Haseltine, head of Human Genome Sciences Inc. of Rockville, a company in the vanguard of the new pharmacology. "We'll be using our knowledge to help the body rebuild itself."

Yet this push for quality-of-life drugs raises vexing new questions for the nation's health-care system. Foremost is the issue of cost. Drug and biotech companies are investing billions to develop the new treatments, in part because they realize that people will pay extraordinary prices to get them.

The nation's insurers and large private employers already are deeply worried about the potential cost of these drugs. While overall health-care inflation has been brought under control by the advent of managed care, some big insurance plans have been reporting double-digit increases in the last couple of years in prescription costs.

Insurers fear that a few more expensive drugs like Viagra could help to reignite health-care inflation.

Certainly there's no question that the public wants the drugs. As the nation's pharmacopeia expands over the next decade, it will find a prime market in the baby-boom generation, the 76 million Americans born from 1946 to 1964. The baby boomers are a politically potent and expanding segment of the population, and they are not likely to roll over just because insurance companies don't want to pay for things. To this market, drug and biotech companies hope to introduce a whole slew of new compounds over the next few years that help to slow down the ravages of age.

There's nothing new about the idea that pharmaceuticals can improve one's quality of life. Not dying of bacterial infections because antibiotics are available is certainly a quality-of-life improvement. What is new, perhaps, is the focus on personal happiness as a prime or even the sole criterion by which to measure the worth of a drug.

"There was a time when drugs to make you thin or drugs to make your hair grow again were kind of looked down upon," said Mark Edwards, a biotechnology analyst in San Francisco. "Now, these things are starting to be looked at as real medicine."

Many of the new drugs, such as those under development to help people lose weight, will be possible because science is gaining a deep understanding of the way the body works at the molecular level. Researchers are racing to unravel the body's genetic code, gaining clues to the underlying causes of conditions such as obesity and to the degenerative changes that accompany aging. Once the root causes are understood, highly specific drugs can be designed to target each problem.

"This really is the golden age of pharmaceutical research," said Andy McCormick, a spokesman for Pfizer Inc., the company that developed Viagra. "We are learning a tremendous amount rapidly, a lot of it based on the genetic revolution. We're taking the insights that we're gaining and applying them to quality-of-life medicines. And Viagra is a good example."

It also is a good example of how costly the new drugs will be to develop and buy. Pfizer says it spent $500 million developing Viagra. Drug companies estimate they are spending about $20 billion a year developing new treatments, a number that has been rising faster than inflation.

Given the up-front development costs, Pfizer says it's justified in charging about $7 at wholesale for one 50 milligram tablet of Viagra, a price that makes it 14 times more expensive than its equivalent weight in gold. Viagra costs $10 a pill at retail. Yet that hasn't stopped the many thousands of men who are demanding the drug. If the demand holds up, Viagra may well become the best-selling drug in history.

Will insurance companies require that people be overweight by a certain fixed percentage before they'll pay for the drugs? Will they feel it necessary to set limits on how many pills of Viagra an impotent man can buy with his insurance card — deciding, in effect, how many episodes of sex a week are reasonable for a man of a certain age?

And if there are no limits, are Americans prepared to see the cost of health care start rising again, undermining economic growth and hurting people who aren't wealthy?

"We've had a kind of honeymoon in the last few years on health-care costs," said Helen Darling, a benefits analyst with Watson Wyatt Worldwide, a consulting company. "These new treatments, repairing damage done over a lifetime, will force a new public debate about what costs should be borne by everyone through socialized dollars. I believe the big crunch is still ahead of us."

Mogul Making

Jonathan Yardley

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST
The Early Years, 1863-1910
By Ben Procter
Oxford. 345pp. $30



William Randolph Hearst: Portrait of a tumultuous life

IT IS instructive and rather amusing evidence of the fleeting nature of fame that William Randolph Hearst is now remembered, if at all, for two reasons: He was the model for Charles Foster Kane, protagonist of Orson Welles's great film Citizen Kane, and he was the great-grandfather of Patricia Hearst, whose kidnapping by the Symbionese Liberation Army in 1974 was tabloid fodder for what seemed an eternity.

So a quick reminder: Hearst was the unimaginably pampered, willful child of wealthy Californians. He stumbled into newspaper work and found it to his liking. He acquired the San Francisco Examiner from his father in 1887 and made it a success with what his latest biographer calls "the ageless . . . formula of love and sex, tragedy and pathos, crime and violence." He moved on to New York, bought the Journal, and entered into a vicious war with Joseph Pulitzer's World, in which "yellow journalism" was born. Together the two dragged the country into a foolish war against Spain. Hearst had political ambitions and used his papers to advance them. He was elected to Congress but was more interested in higher office: mayor of New York City, governor of New York State, president of the United States. Mercifully, he never attained any of these.

That is the story so far as Ben Procter takes it in this, the first of two volumes devoted to Hearst's life. Procter is right to claim that the availability of new material warrants a new appraisal of this tumultuous life. But Procter is not the man for the job. His book is earnest and loaded with minute facts, and in some instances his assessment of his subject is perceptive, but his writing is hardly better than that in the worst of Hearst's own publications. The book has more gratuitous exclamation points than a comic strip in a Hearst newspaper.

Procter, who teaches history at Texas Christian University, is wholly in tune with contemporary biography. He revels unashamedly in the discovery of small and essentially meaningless facts; it really matters to him, for example, that Hearst's parents "were not married in Stedville, Missouri," that instead "I did find their marriage certificate that named Steelville, Missouri."

It is true that, in the biography of a newspaper publisher who changed the face of the American newspaper, we need examples of what his newspapers did; but where one or two will suffice, Procter gives us six or seven. He has succumbed to one of the biographer's most seductive temptations: He has fallen in love with his research, and insists on giving us every scintilla of it.

Still, credit must be given where it is due. His portrait of Willie Hearst the boy is penetrating, balanced but in the end damning. By age 10 "he was surprisingly cognizant of poverty and injustice as well as the power of money when used judiciously." His adoring mother gave him everything he needed and far, far more. As his properly exasperated father put it: "There's one thing sure about my boy Bill. I've been watching him, and I notice that when he wants cake, he wants cake; and he wants it now. And I notice that after a while he gets his cake."

He always did. He assumed that the world existed to serve him and his desires, and he sailed along serene in that assumption. Yet what is truly strange is that this spoiled rich boy, this vain fool whose narcissism bordered on lunacy, had a remarkable feeling for ordinary Americans. As Procter describes him when his career was still in its early phases:

"During almost a decade in the newspaper business he had seldom been wrong in his assessment of the American people's strengths and foibles, of their wishes and desires. By 'taking his own pulse,' . . . Hearst instinctively mirrored this restlessness in a changing society, the frustrations for world recognition within a growing nation."

Later on in his life, as Hearst grew old and fat and complacent, he lost touch with the people, and his empire began its long downward slide. But when he was young he believed in what he said and wrote, and the people responded. For all its weaknesses, Procter's biography catches him clearly in this high moment of his strange life.

A Bluegrass Ballad

Roxana Robinson

CAVEDWELLER
By Dorothy Allison
Dutton. 434pp. $24.95

DOROTHY ALLISON'S first novel was the critically acclaimed Bastard Out Of Carolina, a dark and troubling story of family struggles set in the rural South. Her second novel, Cavedweller, occupies the same cultural territory: poor whites in hardscrabble places — trailer parks, shabby houses, worn-out fields. Here again are pregnancy, marriage, alcoholism, abuse, illness and desertion — the fierce turmoil of family life. However, the tenor of the new book is decidedly different: If Bastard is as solitary and painful as a blues lament, Cavedweller is as lively and crowded as a bluegrass ballad.

In fact, popular music plays an important role in the book, which starts at a brisk tempo in Los Angeles with the romantic death by motorcycle of Randall Pritchard, lead singer in the rock group Mud Dog. "Randall never made a sound. He simply followed the bike's trajectory, over the railing toward the sunrise, his long hair shining in the pink-gold glow and his arms outstretched to meet the rusty spokes of the construction barrier . . . 'Delia' . . . The man just whispered 'Delia' and died." You hear that banjo starting up? Now the pace gets faster, the narrative line more intricate.

Delia, Randall's ex-wife and ex-band member, is watching the sunrise, thinking of the 24-hour liquor store, and humming an old lyric about a man who never returned. Despite the 17-year-old girl on the motorcycle with him, Randall had never stopped loving Delia. But Delia left him after he flipped the T-bird in Topanga Canyon, nearly killing the two of them and nearly blinding their daughter Cissy. This "broke the last of Delia's love for him," but Randall had a hard time grasping this, since he had settled into "what he called his Keith Richards solution, boosting his heroin with just enough speed to keep himself mobile and charming." Delia didn't do drugs; all she "ever needed was a drink in her hand," which she'd had most of the time, especially when she sang. "People said that hearing Delia Byrd sing in concert was like hearing heartbreak in a whole new key." When she left Randall, two years earlier, Delia quit both drinking and singing, but still she's not happy. The banjo is off and running and now the fiddle starts up.

After Randall sails into the pink sunrise, Delia takes Cissy and heads back home to Cayro, Georgia, where she was born. She's going back to find her two older daughters, Amanda and Dede, whom she hasn't seen in a decade. Her first husband, Clint Windsor, was alcoholic and brutal, and one desperate night, her face black and blue, Delia climbed onto the Mud Dog tour bus, which was passing through town. Randall pulled her up the steps and out of her marriage. When Delia tried to get custody of her daughters, she was foiled by the vindictive Clint and his self-righteous mother. Delia has never dared set foot in Cayro again, but she dreamed of the daughters she left behind. "The dream children cried her name and held on to her 'Mama. We knew you would come' . . . But the dream daughters were ghost girls, imaginary creatures." Now the harmony starts up, sweet and plaintive.

CAYRO is not overjoyed to see Delia back. "You that bitch ran off and left her babies" announces the cook at a roadside restaurant. Delia's father's only greeting, after a decade, is "Fifth excuse for a car, Delia." Cissy is furious to be in Cayro, "the backside of nowhere," and jealous of "the family Delia loved more than she would ever love Cissy." And predictably, Amanda and Dede, the dream-daughters, are now sullen adolescents who do not throw their arms around Delia's neck crying Mama, we knew you would come.

The song of Delia Byrd's return is fast-paced, entertaining and complicated, sung by a wide spectrum of voices. Music is everywhere: Songs are in people's minds, hummed phrases create moods and the greats are familiarly mentioned like relatives or deities.

Once Delia's story really gets going, voices weaving in and out, instruments going full strength and lickety-split, it's more than a ballad — it's a full-blown hoedown. Last all night, everyone dances. As for what happens in the end: Well, this is country music, not opera. Everyone goes home tuckered out but feeling good.

Civil Rights and Political Wrongs

Jacob Weisberg

LIFT EVERY VOICE
Turning a Civil Rights Setback Into a New Vision of Social Justice
By Lani Guinier
Simon & Schuster. 336pp. $25

IN THE lengthening annals of Bill Clinton's caddishness, the early episode of Lani Guinier still stands out. After naming his Yale Law classmate to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, the president looked on as she was mugged by a gang of bullies — before finally joining in the attack himself. After failing to persuade Guinier to bail him out by withdrawing her own nomination, Clinton rescinded it, publicly declaring that the views expressed in her academic writings were "undemocratic."

This was not just a lousy way to treat a friend. It was a display of political cowardice that damaged the new administration by sending a signal that Clinton could be easily rolled. That Guinier's advocacy of measures designed to enhance minority representation, such as proportional representation, wasn't in any meaningful way "undemocratic" made the betrayal even harder.

Guinier has been trying to make sense of it ever since. In her second book since the event she refers to as her "disappointment," she describes what happened to her and discusses what she has learned from it. The first half of her book is as vivid and lucid an account as we are likely to get of what it's like to be at the center of a political feeding frenzy.

Blessed with a fine memory and a novelist's eye for detail, Guinier has reconstructed an absorbing, almost minute-by-minute narrative of her awful experience. What continues to gnaw at her is not the unfair attacks on her from the right. Rather, she remains angry at the shoddy work of those whose responsibility it was to sort out fact from fiction. Lazy journalists reported on her views based on second-hand distortions of her law review articles. Administration officials and insiders like Vernon Jordan said they'd protect her from the sharks — then stood back and watched as she got eaten alive.

Many books of this type are exercises in self-pity and score-settling. Guinier manages to tell her story without indulging in either. She comes across as a person of independent mind and strong spirit. She reexamines her experience of five years ago not as a personal grievance but as a problem for the civil rights movement. Guinier thinks that a climate in which views such as hers are deemed "out of the mainstream" is one in which the civil rights lobby is in trouble.

Unfortunately, the second half of the book, in which Guinier tries to draw broader lessons, is much weaker than the first. The civil rights lobby, she argues, has paid a price for becoming too legalistic in its orientation. It has lost the simple moral force it had in the 1960s. The leading civil rights groups know how to fight battles in Washington, but they are no longer skilled at generating the kind of grass-roots pressure that once forced the great civil rights measures of the 1960s through Congress. Guinier would like to get civil rights out of the courtroom and make it a popular cause again.

This is a fine aspiration. But Guinier has not fully processed the implications of her analysis. The principal heroes in her account are the very civil rights lawyers she thinks have led the movement off course. And while calling for a mass movement, she offers few constructive suggestions about how to rebuild it. The anti-majoritarian devices with which Guinier is most closely identified are hardly the sorts of issues that can be expected to bring marchers into the streets (End Run-offs Now! No More First Past the Post!). Guinier expresses a passionate commitment to social justice, but it hardly amounts to the "new vision" of civil rights promised by her subtitle.

But if Lani Guinier has not yet figured out how to breathe new life into the civil rights movement, she has at least taught one person a valuable political lesson. Last year, when conservatives began taking potshots at Bill Lann Lee, a subsequent appointee to the Civil Rights Division, Bill Clinton made it clear he was not going to make the same mistake twice. This time he would stand by his nominee.

Eastern Europe is agog to learn English, but you won't find a job unless you have the proper skills, writes **Andrew Mason**

Preach what you teach

HERR ISSYVOO, the narrator of Christopher Isherwood's Goodbye To Berlin, could easily manage to support himself in the German capital of the 1930s by giving English lessons. So too could the adventurous Brit wandering through eastern Europe in the early 1990s.

Now, however, such sublime confidence in the marketability of one's untrained native-language skills may be misplaced. After the heady period following the collapse of communism, when it seemed that anyone whose mother tongue was English could be assured of a few months' teaching work whenever they needed it, the local customers these days are demanding both formal qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and a longer-term commitment from those they choose to employ. Native speakers are no longer a "must-have" at any cost.

What has changed? First, the market has rapidly become discriminating. Second, employers have had their fingers burnt too many times.

The breakdown of the Soviet empire in 1989-90 created a headlong scramble in eastern Europe to catch up with the West after "50 wasted years". English being the lingua franca of the Western world, it was seen as the *sine qua non* of business and social development — or as a means of escape — and a huge demand for English language teaching (ELT) sprang up virtually overnight.

In Poland, for instance, the British Council quickly extended its previously token Studium network, which provides English language skills for Polish university staff, to embrace all the major universities. The studia, in turn, soon began to offer ELT to all-comers who could pay the fee.

The growth in private language schools was even more rapid. Even the somewhat moribund Polish education authorities were inspired to crank up their provision of ELT, so that whereas in 1990 there were fewer than 2,000 state-trained Polish teachers of English by 1998 there were nearly 20,000 (a number of whom were retrained teachers of Russian).

Under communism, the polyglot nations of eastern Europe had had little need to find terms in their own languages for business and computing. This communications gap yawned widest in the early 1990s, and the simplest solution was to adopt the appropriate terms from English. Thus the mushrooming demand nowadays for courses in business and computer English.

Language schools in the more attractive cities of central Europe draw hundreds of inquiries a month, but most are now recruiting by word of mouth based on personal recommendation

As business becomes ever more competitive, however, so the customers have grown more sophisticated in their requirements: they know exactly what kind of language they need, and they can pick and choose among the many people clamouring to provide it. Business English is big business, and your untrained hopeful teacher won't get a look in.

And, for those running language schools, employing native speakers can provide unique headaches. Unless you're careful, warns one jaded manager in central Poland, you can get some "real weirdos and misfits" — like the murderer wanted in Britain who was found hiding in a school in Warsaw, or the teacher sacked for incompetence in Wloclawcek who turned to busking in the main railway station, with a notice proclaiming himself to be the town's "third martyr" (the other two were in the 16th century).

Even where the teachers are "normal" (give or take occasional drunkenness or an accent so thick that not even their colleagues can understand them), often their only qualification is English as a mother tongue and they have little idea of how to teach.

For trained and experienced teachers without any background in EFL, trying to explain the vagaries of English can also cause real problems. Rosalind McGinley, director of the Lodz University English Language Centre, says: "Even now, native speakers are offering themselves with only the haziest notion of how the English language works. A four-week certificate in ELT [which is the most common qualification presented] is a help, but doesn't really compete with the five years' extensive study of English language and teaching methodology which the best of the Polish teachers get."

For those coming to state educational institutions, the sometimes primitive teaching conditions can be a shock. So can the accommodation: like the hostel for foreigners whose telephone switchboard is closed at night and all day Sunday, which expects a single obsolete, manually operated washing machine to do for more than 100 residents, and whose fridges are warmer than the rooms in winter.

Those who come optimistically expecting to meet Western attitudes and resources can find themselves locked instead into a struggle just to get by. That, coupled with the poor pay (the equivalent of $60-80 a month in Belarus or the Baltic states, for example), leads to a high turnover in native-speaker teachers — up to 50 per cent a year.

Moreover the octopus-like bureaucracy that still strangles the post-communist countries maintains that local teachers of English are just as good as imported ones, and presents a daunting course of immigration and work permit obstacles as though EFL teachers were illegal migrants from the ex-Soviet republics.

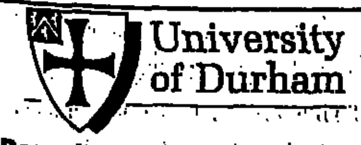
But native speaker teachers are still — on the whole — held in high regard. As McGinley points out, they help the local teachers keep their own language skills alive and up to date. They also provide an authenticity and undeniable authority in language matters — what Malgorzata Szwaj, head of school of English Unlimited in Gdansk, calls a "credibility" that the school is "preaching what it teaches".

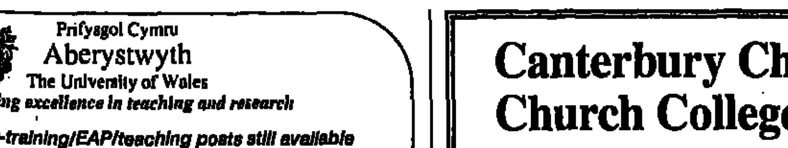
But choosing these teachers is getting more rigorous. While language schools in the more attractive cities of central Europe, such as Prague and Krakow, draw hundreds of inquiries a month, most are now recruiting the other way, by word of mouth based on personal recommendation, and careful screening.

English Unlimited, with 3,500 students one of the largest private language schools in Poland, tries to have about 15-20 native speakers on a staff of more than 90 teachers, and finds it worth advertising vacancies in the Guardian and making a special trip to London each year to evaluate potential recruits.

Most schools insist on some formal TEFL qualifications and experience as a minimum, and are looking also for adaptability — that combination of robustness, flexibility and resourcefulness that ensures survival in and out of the language classroom. Once native-speaker teachers have proved themselves in local conditions, they find themselves cherished.

Andrew Mason teaches English in Poland at the University of Szczecin and the British Council Studium











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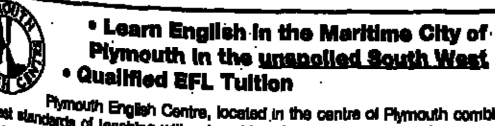
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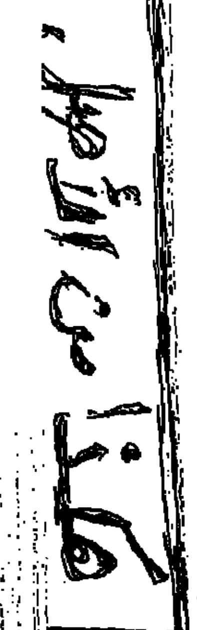
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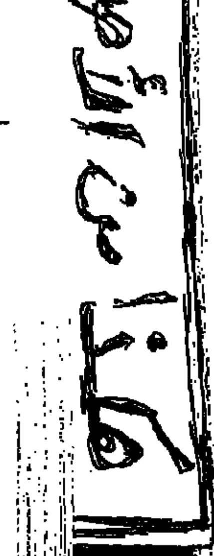
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Culture war heroine

David Sharrock on a transsexual's win in the Eurovision Song Contest

A *HEROINE'S* welcome awaited Dana International at Ben Gurion airport last weekend, where the transsexual winner of the Eurovision Song Contest was transformed into a standard bearer for artistic freedom in the "culture wars" between Israel's religious and secular communities.

Dana, who was born Yaron Cohen and underwent a sex-change operation five years ago, captured the Eurovision title in a nail-biting climax. Britain's Imaani came second, but most of the estimated 100 million viewers seemed to agree Dana was by far the most glamorous entrant.

Thousands of fans packed Tel Aviv's Rabin Square in the early hours of Sunday to celebrate Dana's victory, the choice of venue for the party carrying its own resonance. Yitzhak Rabin — whom Dana supported — was murdered by a rightwing religious extremist for seeking a land-for-peace deal with the Palestinians.

Her disco tune Diva was tied with Malta before the last round of voting, and victory came courtesy of eight points from the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

Despite noisy demonstrations by ultra-Orthodox Jews outside her concerts, Dana has become one of Israel's most popular stars, with each new release notching up platinum discs.

Israel Radio said her victory was a two-fold win, "for Israel on its 50th anniversary and for artistic freedom in the culture wars which have evolved between the religious and secular communities".

Speaking at a press conference in Birmingham, where the contest was held last Saturday, Dana said: "People have judged my song and my performance and not my sexuality, and I am glad for that.

"I forgive everyone who has judged me on my sexuality. My victory has proved that God is with me. I want to send a message to the Jewish community and say to them, 'Try to accept me, my kind of life and the choice I have made.' What I am does not mean I do not believe in God."

Many Israelis seemed stunned by her victory. President Ezer Weizman, who has been criticised in the past for his off-the-cuff macho remarks, chose his words carefully. "I believe that it's very nice the state of Israel won first prize," he said.

Radio talkshows in Israel speculated, only half in jest, whether the government of Binyamin Netanyahu, which includes ultra-Orthodox parties, would collapse if he congratulated Dana with a kiss. His office made no comment.

Shas, the party which has led the anti-Dana campaign, accused her of gimmickry. "It's a sign of the bankruptcy of Israeli song," said Rabbi Shlomo Benizri, Shas's deputy health minister. "God is against this phenomenon. It's a sickness you must cure and not give legitimacy."

Dana's own comment on ultra-Orthodox opposition was succinct. "Listen, they are not exactly my audience."

The Israel Broadcasting Authority vowed to stage the Eurovision contest next year in Jerusalem, as is the winning country's right. The competition may prove interesting as it will take place only days after the date by which the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, has pledged to declare a state in territories occupied by Israel. The new Palestinian state may even enter its own singer.

Dana International celebrates her Eurovision win PHOTO: DAVID JONES

Harmonious neighbours

Nancy Banks-Smith

"*IF ANYTHING'S* going to go wrong, it'll go wrong now," said Ulrika Jonsson as telephone voting began in the Eurovision Song Contest.

The Dutch spokeswoman, Connie Vandenbosch, was a well preserved blonde with all her own teeth. Connie said: "Before I start giving you my points, I should like to say that my heart goes out to the singers in the contest because I know what they feel." She had sung in the Eurovision herself.

"A long time ago, was it?" asked Ulrika kindly. The roar of laughter from a 4,500 audience drowned her appalled "No, I didn't mean that!"

It was human nature that swung the result. Dana International, the exotic Israeli who has taken circumcision further than most, and Chiara, a big girl in a bell tent from Malta, had 166 votes each. There was one country left to vote. It had no name but plenty of it. The citizens of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia — by now nerves were twanging like an ethnic string instrument — gave Israel 8, the UK 10 ("Malta's got it!" cried Terry Wogan) *and Croatia 12.*

We know one thing about the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. It's very near to Croatia. And that, little children, is why Israel came first, the UK second and Malta third.

Apart from a gunfire rattle during Romania's voting, suggesting that the People's Freedom Front had burst into the studio, the technology of telephone voting went like a song.

The coveted *nul points*, or Nordic egg as they say in Scandinavia, went to Switzerland. As the singer was a Swiss tap dancing champion seven times running, I would have advised her to incorporate a few tap steps into her tormented ditty, subliminally suggesting The Good Ship Lollipop.

The presentation of the prize was chaotic. For nearly three minutes, a long time on live TV, Dana International did not appear — apparently she had been changing her dress — and Ulrika had to content herself with kissing a couple of Israelis. Finally, Dana crash-landed centre stage, sprouting highly coloured flight feathers along her arms.

Her winning song, shrewdly written in Eurovision Esperanto, celebrated Victoria . . . Aphrodite . . . Cleopatra. And, if that is a reference to our own dear queen, she will not be amused.



Science's elusive search for the magic bullet

We are all afraid of cancer, so when scientists hold out prospects of a cure the world goes wild. If only it were that simple, write **Sarah Boseley** and **Tim Radford**

CANCER is Britain's biggest killer, causing one in four deaths. It is a stealthy predator, corrupting the cells of a healthy body, doing damage and hastening death without displaying, for a long while, any outward sign. The treatment is unpleasant and the outcome uncertain. Small wonder it is so feared.

Nobody can be sure they will not fall prey to some form of the disease. One in three of us will develop it sometime in our lifetime — in the breast, in the bowel, in the lung or some other part of our body we thought we knew. So when some of the many scientists who spend their lives searching for clues and cures for these diseases take any sort of step forward, the world goes wild.

So it was with Tamoxifen, the drug that researchers in the United States declared prevented breast cancer in high-risk women last month. So it was with p-53, the gene that Scottish scientists say can protect against the toxic chemicals found in tobacco smoke. So it is, most recently, with the news that a combination of two drugs can kill off tumours in mice by blocking their blood supply.

Each of these so-called breakthroughs starts the phone lines of Britain's 600-plus cancer charities buzzing. Men and women with terminal cancer wonder if perhaps it is not too late after all. Relatives make the pilgrimage to their doctor, to the oncologist, to the cancer charity to ask if perhaps their dying mother can have this new treatment. Inevitably, the answer is — not yet.

So are we any nearer to the magic bullet — the cure for cancer that will come in the shape of a pill we can pop with our afternoon tea? In truth, it will probably never be as simple as that, but the chances of our children and grandchildren surviving cancer are improving all the time.

Professor Gordon McVie, head of the Cancer Research Campaign, says the discoveries fall into two groups — those that are of use mainly to other researchers, and those that are of real value to the cancer patient or, more probably, the potential cancer patient.

But the Tamoxifen story, he suggests, is brilliant, because it shows how the two worlds combine.

"The lung cancer gene is really of more interest to researchers than to potential patients. Nobody is going to have a gene test and then decide to take up smoking because it is safe for them." Back in the lab, however, other researchers might use the discovery to help them design a therapy.

But the discovery of a breast cancer susceptibility gene started an argument that raged for three years. You might ask, says McVie, "what's the point of finding that gene when you have nothing to offer the women who have it?" You have to tell them they have an 80 per cent likelihood of getting cancer in their lifetime and you are terribly sorry.

Enter Tamoxifen. The drug has been in trials in the US, Britain and Italy. The Americans have cut short their study, saying there is incontrovertible evidence that it protects women at high risk — those, for instance, with the breast cancer gene — from developing the disease. Their scientists say it is unfair on those women in the trials who have been on an inert placebo not to allow them to take the real thing.

UK scientists were appalled, because they feared the American move would jeopardise the British trial — a project to which they are still trying to recruit 7,000 women. Even though the Americans and, it is being said, the Italians, feel Tamoxifen's benefits are proven, the British scientists want to know more about the long-term effects. In fact, the reverse has happened. Many more women in the high-risk category have come forward as volunteers. "That shows that people are discerning if things are presented in a way they understand," remarks McVie.

But what about the drugs that kill cancers in mice? This is a line of research that Judah Folkman, a Harvard professor and researcher at Boston Children's Hospital, has been pursuing for decades. He is not the only one. In Britain, research in north London funded by the Cancer Research Campaign has come to similar conclusions. Scientists are certainly enthused about the prospects. But should cancer patients get excited?

McVie urges caution. It is far too early to know whether the tumour-busting success of combined angiostatin and endostatin will work in humans. Such translations have failed before.

About five years ago, it was thought there was a similar breakthrough with a substance called flavone acetic acid, or FAA. That also closed down the blood vessels that supplied the tumours. It worked in mice. It did not work in humans.

> **It is hard to remain cool in the battle against cancer. It is too fundamentally important for us**

Nigel Bundred, Reader in Surgical Oncology at the University Hospital of South Manchester, is appalled by the recent spate of splash headlines. "I have not seen five major advances in the last few weeks," he says. "But people are coming to our clinic, some of them with advanced cancers, saying I want that drug — it's going to cure me."

It is not scientific breakthroughs that are responsible for the drop in deaths from cancer, he says, but improvements in the systems for dealing with them. Cervical cancer screening and breast cancer screening have significantly reduced mortality. Improved diagnosis and better access to treatment such as chemotherapy for those who need it has increased survival. The incidence of cancer is still on the up, but fewer people are dying of it, rather as fewer people began to die of tuberculosis when hygiene and housing improved.

"In America they have the National Cancer Institute, which vets the quality of the therapy offered and also vets research findings," says Bundred. "It advises journalists and others on whether it is worthwhile or whether it is just some guy chancing his arm. I think we need some sort of code of conduct." In the UK, he says, anything is put out as a breakthrough, talked up by excited scientists and further hyped by journalists.



Casualties of Chernobyl . . . a mother hugs her baby after the explosion at the Ukrainian nuclear plant PHOTO: VICTORIA IVLEVA

Cancer astonishes scientists. It always did. "I wish I had the voice of Homer," wrote the great biologist J B S Haldane, "to sing of rectal carcinoma." It fascinated him even as it killed him.

The mortality rate may sound shocking but, looked at another way, cancer is actually very rare. There are 100 million million cells in the human body, and death from cancer follows because just one of them has gone terminally haywire. Yet all of them go wrong all the time. The DNA in the cell makes 50,000 mistakes an hour, but the miraculous machinery of the human body steps in 50,000 times an hour and sets it right again, and this process goes on hour after hour, decade after decade.

The mystery, says Gerard Evan, is why we die of it at all. Evan is Royal Society Professor at University College London, and principal scientist at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. He has been puzzling over cancer all his working life.

"Cancer is almost so rare it never happens. If we could move the mean incidence of cancer 20 years back in people's lives, it would cease to be a public health issue. There are young people who get cancer, and there are statistical anomalies, and each one of those anomalies is a human being, and that human being matters. But in general, the mystery is: how cancer is so rare."

The goal is to understand what restrains the growth of rogue cells: the machinery that, millions of times a day, stops cancer in its tracks. If scientists can fully understand the natural mechanisms that rein in cancer cells, destroy them, trigger them into committing suicide, or starve them, then they will know where to look for a cure.

Life past reproductive age is a bonus: a consequence of being fit enough to live to 40 to start with. If you make it that far, your cell machinery is good enough to let you carry on, for a while at least. But the problem gets more complicated with time, because cancer is a protean enemy. It is different in different tissues, and even in different individuals. So are the defences.

Take the epithelial tissues that line the body: the skin, the lungs, the gut, all of them in the front line of carcinogenic assault.

Evan says: "They have an incredibly effective anti-cancer mechanism. Every three or four days they just slough the stuff off. If you are throwing away damaged cells they are never going to accumulate in your body as tumour cells."

But skin, lung and bowel cancer are big killers nevertheless. Different types of tissues will be involved in different types of mutations. However, there are clear, common lessons to be drawn. There will be many common features in rogue cells, even in colon cancer. "You have got to have a mutation that makes you grow uncontrollably," says Evan. "You have got to have a mutation that makes you live uncontrollably, and you have got to have a mutation that means you cannot be shed properly, in order to be there in the first place."

So at least three things all have to go wrong before a cancer can start. But some mutations contain their own booby traps.

"There are mutations that make you grow uncontrollably, but those same mutations activate the cell suicide mechanism. In normal cells, that is not a problem," says Evan. "But tumours by definition are in the wrong place. So a lot of cells that would form tumours, we now believe, undergo these mutations to make them proliferate, but are in the wrong place to get these survival signals they need. They don't get them, so they kill themselves off. This cell death programme acts like a booby trap. Unless you know how to stop the booby trap, it will spring. So the very mutation that would cause you to become a tumour now prevents you from becoming one."

But something does defuse the booby trap: people do die. There may be a one in 100,000 billion chance of two things going wrong simultaneously in a cell — but there are 100 trillion cells: it will happen. So all over the world, scientists are staring at the miracle of programmed cell death, confident that within it lies one answer to cancer. And there are even simpler answers

Not so long ago cancer researchers relied on the napalm approach: they bombarded the cancer and hoped for the best. The game has changed. Research into the fine machinery of the human system has meant that oncologists can pick up a cancer cell, turn it over, look for its Achilles heel and then develop a drug that — ideally — will defuse its potency. Evan says he is convinced it will be possible to cure, prevent or stop those cancers that affect younger people. That is not the same as actually eradicating cancer.

"One is trying to avoid what one might call premature death — to try to keep people's quality of life as great as possible until the inevitable point when things fall apart. But cancer is a pretty horrible way to die. So cancer research is not about living for ever. It is about putting off cancer."

Because there is such intense public interest in cancer — combined with passion and dedication from scientists at the cutting edge of research, the cancer charities' need to keep up their profile for fund-raising and the drug companies' need to make a profit — it will be hard to cool the excitement that boils over with every "breakthrough".

People tend not to hear about the setbacks. Interferon was once said to be a magic bullet, but now has a small but specific use against a rare form of leukaemia. In 1985, there were great hopes for TNF — tumour necrosis factor — a naturally occurring substance that in the end had too many bad side-effects.

For all that, we are slowly progressing. Peter Selby, clinical director of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, sees the war against cancer in three stages since the 1970s. Chemotherapy brought about cures in most cases of a handful of fairly rare cancers, such as testicular cancer. Then in the eighties and early nineties "we made very distinct but small steps forward against common cancers. For breast and bowel cancers we increased cures by about 5 per cent."

Now we are in the era of biotechnology. "I doubt if it will be a magical cure for everything, but I will be very surprised if it doesn't add pieces to the jigsaw," says Selby.

But not yet. It will be a decade before the latest advances turn into widely available treatments. It is hard to remain cool in the battle against cancer. The war against the disease is too fundamentally important for all of us. Only one thing is certain: this is a waiting game.

Art of dying in style, page 33

Last port of call . . . The former Royal Yacht Britannia arriving last week at Leith near Edinburgh where, after refurbishment, it will go on display in August until summer 2000. It will then move to a new £75 million ocean terminal, as a visitor and conference centre PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF I LIVED at the North or South pole and never came into contact with other people, could I catch a cold?

A COLD is usually caused by a respiratory virus, and "caught" or transmitted by susceptible people receiving virus-laden airborne droplets from a sneeze. Viruses require living host cells in which to replicate and have no metabolism of their own by which to survive. They would die out if, having infected one host (who subsequently became immune to that virus), there was then no one left to infect. Thus, living at the polar extremes and never coming into contact with other people, it is unlikely you would catch a cold — but beware of tourists! — *Ian Shaw, Wirral, Merseyside*

IS THERE any country where the rich are getting poorer and the poor getting richer?

IT WOULD be surprising if there was without a revolution. However, the poor may get richer faster than the rich, as occurred in New Zealand from the end of the second world war till the late seventies. Relativities were then about constant until the mid-eighties, when New Zealand's Thatcherite revolution (Rogernomics) began. The economy stagnated with a decline in per capita income, but the share and absolute income of the top 10 per cent increased. A Rowntree Trust study concluded that income inequality increased more in New Zealand than in Britain. — *Brian Easton, Wellington, New Zealand*

ARE THERE still trawlermen hunched over radios reliant on BBC radio shipping forecasts for their weather information?

I DON'T KNOW about trawlermen. But a lot of German pilots and Polish skippers are, as well as Filipino chief officers and almost anyone who is navigating a vessel or positioning an oil rig in the North Sea or in the eastern North Atlantic.

They listen to all the forecasts from Lyngby in Denmark and Scheveningen in Holland to Rogaland in Norway. The BBC is considered one of the most reliable and is conveniently broadcast on long wave. — *Georg Fries, Brunsbuttel, Germany*

ITALIANS are supposed to speak quickly. Are some languages quicker-spoken than others, and if so, is this cultural or inherent in the language?

IT SEEMS likely that the mind, while dependent on language for the expression of ideas, processes thought at a speed which has a high correlation with the intelligence of the subject. When the decoding of thought into spoken language takes place, the speed of the utterance will also depend on the structure of the language. For example: fluent non-native speakers of English (particularly Chinese) in Singapore are sometimes accused of speaking "too fast", cutting off the ends of words. The reason for this seems to lie in the structure of the Chinese language, which has less redundancy due to there being no articles, no plurals and no auxiliary verbs expressing tense. Consequently, in a given period of time more information can be transmitted in Chinese than in English. When using English, native Chinese speakers try to transmit the same amount of information as if using Chinese. — *Alasdair Raynham, Singapore*

ANY reader of bilingual signs in both English and German will note that the German is usually 50 per cent longer. This becomes a problem with English-language films dubbed into German. The dubbers must speak much faster in order to fit the larger number of, and often longer, German words into the actors' lip motions. — *Tibor Pollerman, Ramstein, Germany*

ARE there any criteria for the number of segments in a citrus fruit?

ONE OF my textbooks states that citrus fruit have either five segments or a multiple of five, ie, 0 or 5. Another textbook says 8-5 and then lists the different types as follows: "Lime: 9-2; lemon: 8-0; citron: 0-3; sour and sweet oranges: 0-2; mandarin/tangerine: 0-5; shaddock (pummelo): -6; grapefruit: 2-4." Additionally, navel oranges have a second row of carpels (segments). — *Ulrike Krauss, Tingo Maria, Peru*

TO DETERMINE the number without peeling the fruit, pick out the little green remainder of the flower. Underneath is a tiny circle of dots that matches the number of segments. — *Johannes Saltzwedel, Hamburg*

Any answers?

WHERE did the idea that elephants are frightened of mice originate? Is there any truth in it? — *Kevin Mackenzie, Lamma, Hong Kong*

WHERE does the word "kagoul", as in the rain-deterrent clothing, come from? — *Gail Bratchpiece, London*

WHY does the devil have cloven hooves in Britain but only one horse's hoof in Germany? — *Anton Gill, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Letter from Madagascar Diane Mulligan

Open season

AS THE sun reaches its highest point in the sky Vola walks purposefully past my door. She's on her way to Fort Dauphin, 12km away across the long curve of soft sandy beaches. She's shaded from the sun by a hammerhead shark that lies on its side, its body balanced on the top of her skull; its head and its tail flopped over each ear. Behind her is her husband jogging with a pole across his shoulders. Suspended on either side are 18kg of fresh tuna. It's been a good day's fishing. In less than two hours they will arrive in town to sell to exporters, hotels or at the local market. They eat some manioc before setting off, but take no water. It's nearly 30C.

February and March are known as the "starving season" here in Evatra. The typical catch of sardines is low because of strong cyclonic winds and declining stocks. Once sardines were so plentiful they were used as bait for bigger fish and freely distributed to those in need. Now they're the main source of income.

It is also forbidden to trap lobsters from January to May because they are laying their eggs. Lobsters get five months' respite in which to reproduce, but the overseas demand is so high their numbers have also dwindled.

Soja Jackson, president of a local fishing association he founded with his brothers, said: "Thirty years ago my father caught 100kg of lobster a week, now we're lucky to get 2 or 3kg." Dinas, or local laws, have been introduced in order to stem their decline. It is now forbidden to dive for lobsters but, with hungry families to feed, these new laws are largely ignored by the fishermen. The traditional method of trapping lobster in hand-woven baskets is still allowed from June to December.

Although it's taboo for women to fish, Soja invited me to join him for "educational purposes", just as I had been asked to help transplant the rice in one of his many fields. This extraordinary villager, realising that the future didn't lie in fishing, began transferring his wealth into land some 10 years ago. He also had the foresight to send his children into Fort Dauphin to be educated so they would not suffer the poverty of his fellow fishermen.

I set off at dawn, helping to drag the dugout canoe into the sea. The men fish much as they have done for hundreds of years. They make their own hooks with files and hammers. One recent change has been the introduction of nylon line imported from China instead of natural fibre; another is that several fishermen wear old acrylic dresses that cling to their muscular backs. These men used to fish naked when women were not allowed to go near the bay. But now women from Fort Dauphin sit on their heels and wait for the pirogues to come in. These women pay porters to carry brimming baskets back to town so that they can sell the fish at twice the price they paid the fishermen. A few Chinese restaurant owners used to walk the 12km to buy the fish of Evatra. Now at daybreak the beach is littered with scores of people walking to the tiny, remote village.

THE pirogue was pushed out between the bay's closely formed rocky outcrops, and the huge men gracefully slipped inside, dipping and pulling their paddles against the dark ocean. We dropped anchor, a large rock attached to a hand-plaited sisal rope, about a kilometre off shore. We all paid out our lines and waited. Soja was amused that I knew what to do, so I explained about my childhood fishing experiences in Cornwall.

After three hours we had only caught about 30 sardines between six of us, so Soja decided to head home and spend the rest of the day in his fields. Undeterred, other fishermen waited a further three hours, but they were unrewarded. In hard times like these, zebu are sacrificed in the bay as an offering to the ancestors to bless the sea with more fish.

Back at home I watched the wives waiting for their husbands' earnings so that they could buy rice for the day. And as I watched, I noticed a tourist pass my door. He stopped to tell me how beautiful the coastline and beaches were and how he hadn't been able to resist buying some fresh lobster, although he knew it was closed season.

I asked what he was doing in Madagascar and he replied: "I'm working for the United Nations on Sustainable Development."

A Country Diary

Jack Blocker

ONTARIO: A raccoon slept in the top of a tall tree as we left the road on a path through the spring woods, but our binoculars showed only the usual furry back. Turkey vultures floated overhead, searching the river valley. As we climbed the first hill, we saw below us the north branch of Ontario's Thames. The river was just past spring flood and flowing full and strong to join its sister in the centre of London, whose office towers were just out of sight beyond the dessicated corn fields.

On the far bank, Canada geese rested in last summer's riverflat grasses, now bent and flattened by recurrent winter floods. As a young woman and her dog approached the bank, the geese prudently took to the water and swam upstream. Not so prudent, the dog's owner threw a stick downstream into the rapids, into which the dog enthusiastically plunged in pursuit. After failing to catch up to the swiftly moving stick, the dog turned back upstream but, despite swimming strongly, it was carried after its forgotten quarry. Fortunately the current swept the dog into the shallows near the bank, where it emerged dripping but still in good spirits.

Mergansers, looking like speedy black-and-white crucifixes, flew in pairs up and down the river. Woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches worried the trees, and a warbler flickered from branch to branch. As we returned, we saw that the raccoon had reversed its position and now took note of our passing with an unblinking dark eye.

Commercial break

CINEMA
Richard Williams

SOMETIMES the right film gets made by the wrong person. Lolita, for example, would certainly present a worthwhile challenge to a serious film director. But the pre-emptive furore over the latest screen version of Nabokov's novel might never have arisen had the film been made by a director other than Adrian Lyne, whose sensibility, like that of Humbert Humbert, has led him headlong into a series of fatal traps.

Nabokov's story is one of crime and punishment, its conclusion anything but an advertisement for the acts it portrays, and Lyne's film certainly echoes that implicit verdict. But though often faithful to the novel, Lyne has distorted and coarsened its broader themes in a way that exposes him to a charge of exploiting the text for his own ends.

Lyne's version casts Jeremy Irons as Humbert and Dominique Swain as Lolita. Their performances are the film's saving grace, along with Melanie Griffith as the girl's lubricious mother. Irons deploys all his well-known reserves of elegant anguish in pursuit of the paedophile's tortured essence, while Swain delivers pubescent sass and sulk in appropriate proportions. Moments of shared humour lighten the melodrama; between them, they catch the sense of farce that was a part of Nabokov's weaponry.

Elsewhere Lyne's instincts lead to unhappier results. His decision to advance the girl's age from 12 to 14 may indeed have been conceived in the name of making the content of the film more "acceptable", but it also confers the sinister benefit of giving him the freedom to depict a more advanced sexuality.

This is linked with his reversal of the identities of seducer and seduced. Nabokov saw Humbert as the predator, gradually imposing himself on the girl. Not for a minute does the reader believe that his definition of a nymphet is anything other than a specious self-justification. Yet in Lyne's version, Humbert is little more than a passive admirer. Lolita is the driving force, enticing him to give physical expression to urges that might otherwise have been contained. It is Lolita who parks her gum on his thigh and herself in his lap, with unambiguous intent.

This seems to me a gross and unwarranted distortion of Nabokov's point, which was to examine the culpability of the adult. Once again, however, it has the commercially beneficial effect of giving Lyne a much broader licence to exercise the talent he displayed in Flashdance, Fatal Attraction and, most relevantly, 9½ Weeks — the talent, that is, of a maker of middle-market lingerie adverts. Lolita resembles a commercials director's show-reel rather than a proper film.

Lyne's Lolita is seen writhing naked under white cotton sheets, adjusting her pyjamas, scratching her bum like a girl from an old Athena poster, and (oh yes) sliding a peeled banana into a mouth ringed with scarlet lipstick. She unties the cord of his pyjama trousers like an expensive whore. Hers is a wantonness that claims no specialised appeal, beyond a conventional jailbait fantasy: all men, the director seems to be saying, are prey to this weakness. Nabokov, as far as I can see, made no such claim.



'Tis pity she's a whore . . . Melanie Griffith, Jeremy Irons and Dominique Swain in Lolita

I am happy to defend Lyne's right to make films like this, and to get them exhibited. He, in turn, must respect the right of others to accuse him of failing to live up to the challenge. The truly shocking thing about his Lolita is its banality.

Now that's what I call voyeurism

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

I AM MORE and more impressed by the prescience of Nigel Kneale. In any God-fearing country he would be stoned in the market square. Precisely 30 years ago he wrote the The Year Of The Sex Olympics. I wasn't struck by his prophetic powers at the time — well, you wouldn't be, would you — but his idea of a murderer stalking a young couple for the amusement of TV viewers has acquired a ghastly plausibility.

Last week Channel Four ran consecutively The Tourist Trap (which spied on holidaymakers lured to an isolated hotel), Undercover Britain (a covertly filmed series) and Killer Net (a serial about murdering for fun on the Internet). There was no suggestion this was Nosy Night. Just run-of-the-mill weekday TV.

Tourist Trap is a lesson to us all not to accept sweeties from strange gentlemen or free holidays from TV companies. Groups of Britons, Americans, Germans and Japanese were offered a holiday in Turkey. The hotel, said Channel 4, was transformed into a laboratory to observe human behaviour. In other words, bugged.

Agents provocateurs, planted in each group, set them up, and hidden cameras and microphones recorded their reactions. The Americans expected to be suddenly charged $1,000 for a TV or a car. The Germans thought it might be something to do with pornography. The British suspected a timeshare scam.

David, one of the spies, had qualms and this must be credited to the lad for virtue. "I feel like the worst devil spawn in the world. There's people you like and you're deceiving them." Production laughed.

They had the impudence to call this con a massive psychological experiment. The massive psychological experiment showed that Japanese complain if charged for loo paper and Americans bring their own.

More interestingly, Americans and British accepted drinks stolen from the bar, though the British had the grace to look shifty. The Germans were outraged and the Japanese, you won't believe this, apologised. There are five more programmes to come. The wine is spiked with vinegar (only the Germans send it back). Someone smokes in a no smoking zone (only the Germans objected "Zigarette aus!"). The coach driver acts drunk (only the Germans asked that he should not be sacked in case he had a family). And only the Germans want nothing more to do with the confounded film company.

Killer Net will appeal to males under, say, 30, who are a damn sight more interested in sex and computers than I am. Lynda La Plante is well attuned to this rather specialised group. She created, wrote, and produced it so, if you don't like it, don't look at me.

Scott, a young psychology student, has only an academic interest in the infliction of pain until he meets Charlotte, a sexy sa[...] (Sexy Sadie is different and w[...] come to her.) Charlotte can get[...] of tight leather trousers in a s[...] car faster than any woman [...] When she leaves Scott, he cons[...] himself with interactive porn on [...] Net. Sexy Sadie, a big woman with [...] large appetite for credit card details [...] offers him something even [...] thrilling, interactive murder. "[...] wanna play?" You wanna bet?

Killer Net, garish and neurotic, is vividly directed by Geoff Se[...] (Lynda being otherwise engaged that day). It is shot in Brighton [...] the glare of fairgrounds is [...] ated with sudden gulps of sea air and tangerine sky.

We are people watching a screen on which people are watching a screen. I am reminded of an episode of Friends that went something like this. "This is a picture of you [...] the albino children." "What albino children?" "Oh no, it was the week you spent at computer camp."

Talking of albino children, have you seen a more pallid lad than [...] Higgins, the new world snooker champion? I couldn't raise [...] colour of my picture enough [...] make him look rosy. Since he [...] 16, Higgins has lived in darkened rooms practising the esoteric [...] of making two balls go in different directions at the same time.

I once knew a lifelong [...] nice little man — spitting image [...] white mouse — who got a job in [...] billiards room of a prestigious London club. He left quickly [...] the silver. He said he felt buried alive.

Martha (Monica Potter) is a young American who decides to change her life in a non-specific sort of way and spends her last $99 on a one-way ticket out of Minneapolis. En route to London she bumps into Daniel (Tom Hollander), a bumptious music business executive with a bouffant who falls for her before they've left the check-in queue. Within 24 hours, through a cleverly devised series of coincidences, she has also met Daniel's best friends — Frank (Rufus Sewell), an out-of-work actor, and Laurence (Joseph Fiennes), who teaches bridge to classes of middle-aged women. They, too, fall in love with her.

And still they come, the parade of eager aspirants to the worldwide success of Four Weddings and The Full Monty. But Nick Hamm's romantic comedy Martha — Meet Frank, Daniel and Laurence, is the real thing with a genuinely witty script and four fine young actors.

This is a coming-of-age comedy — which, given our culture's evolution into extended adolescence, means that all the protagonists are aged around 30, and beginning to concentrate on the meaning of success and failure.

Could three such disparate characters, bound only by their friendship, fall for the same woman? Potter, previously seen as Nicolas Cage's wife in ConAir, makes it seem a realistic proposition. She has the kind of beguiling presence that Julia Roberts brought to Pretty Woman — a fresh sort of beauty, spiringly cheerful, but capable of a neat switch to bemused introspection. The face of an angel, the soul of a Gypsy — you know the type.

All the men work well with her, but the best scenes are the ones in which they squabble among themselves. Hollander's clownish neurosis, Sewell's sharp timing and Fiennes's dark-eyed intensity blend in a lively three-part harmony.

Conduct becoming

CLASSICAL MUSIC
Andrew Clements

NOBODY has ever done it before — appearing in a cycle of Beethoven's piano concertos and symphonies in London as both soloist and conductor. But then, there's nobody quite like Daniel Barenboim. He is the exception who proves the rule that great pianists cannot transform themselves into great conductors, and the energy that he still puts into both facets of his art proves he takes neither responsibility for granted.

In the opening programme at London's Festival Hall — the First Piano Concerto and the Eroica Symphony — everything had a fresh-minted quality, a sense of excitement. All six of these concerts are clearly going to be special events.

Barenboim has been the conductor of the Chicago Symphony since 1991, but he is giving this cycle with his other orchestra, the Berlin Staatskapelle, house band of the Staatsoper, where he is artistic director. The Staatskapelle is the oldest of Berlin's orchestras and it has carefully preserved its distinctive, central European qualities. The sound, founded upon a mellow string tone, does not strive for the glossy surfaces of so many orchestras in the musical jet set; each line has its own character — tangy oboes, woody clarinets, soft-edged trumpets — and textures take on an inner life, a sense of purposeful expressiveness, which Barenboim exploits for all they are worth.

When Barenboim conducts from the keyboard, it's obvious that he views piano and orchestra as a unity. There's no suggestion of regarding the other players as subsidiary or leaving them to fend for themselves while he gilds the solo line. Even when tackling demanding passagework with one hand, Barenboim is shaping and cajoling the accompaniment with the other, illuminating it just as meticulously as he phrases and inflects his own playing.

The Eroica was necessarily on a different scale altogether, yet still tightly concentrated, and still eager to seize upon every chance to make a dramatic effect. Barenboim isn't a fine operatic conductor for nothing, and the way in which he achieved a magical stillness after one of the climaxes in the funeral march, and ignited its double fugue with a vividly characterised string line, provided real theatrical frissons. It wasn't an unduly tragic account of the movement, but then it wasn't an especially portentous view of the symphony as a whole — rather one in which every element was perfectly proportioned and placed, and which discharged all its energy in the explosive coda of the finale with utter inevitability.

Intimations of infinity

ART
Adrian Searle

THE VOID hangs over our heads, it is above the ceiling and beyond the sky. The void is a hole in the wall, the open invitation to the dark-blue nowhere. The abyss is at our feet, to catch us unawares.

We might well shrink before the vertiginous terrors of the abyss. It is probably best not to look down. This is one of life's earliest lessons, a lesson taught and retaught every time Wily Coyote runs pinwheeling over the edge of the cliff and keeps on going till he notices that the ground is no longer beneath him. But a little of the void goes a very long way, even though the thought of it is horribly compelling.

Which brings me to Anish Kapoor's exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery, until June 14. Born in Bombay in 1954, Kapoor represented Britain at the 1990 Venice Biennale and won the Turner Prize in 1991. This is his largest British show to date. It is impeccable, extremely elegant and full of surprises.

Architect Claudio Silvestrin's exhibition design respects both the Hayward's architecture and Kapoor's intentions as an artist, bringing out the best in both. The Hayward is a difficult building. It is a concrete bunker whose stairwells and ramp break the continuity of views, as do the shifts in ceiling height and the dramatic switches from artificial lighting in the lower gallery to top-lit daylight on the upper floor. Silvestrin has succeeded in unifying the spaces with the work. With Kapoor, he has created a totality. All that is concrete dissolves into air.

Kapoor, working in a startling variety of materials and making works of distinctly different physical character, returns again and again to the idea of the void. As much as Kapoor has filled the galleries with objects and forms, he has also filled the Hayward with holes, apparently infinite spaces and limitless blanks.

The void, it turns out, is a very sculptural issue. The sculptor, as much as being concerned with materials, mass, gravity and form, is inevitably bound to think about the formless and the limitless. Working with such irrefutably solid materials as stainless steel, marble, limestone and bronze, he makes us begin to doubt our sense of the solid. Instead, it is space itself that becomes palpable. What is absent or lost is as present in Kapoor's work as objects themselves.

Looking at his works we find ourselves displaced and dissolved, our boundaries beginning to slip. And the void is not just spiritual, it's sexy, or at least sexed. On one wall, Kapoor has built up a white bulge, contiguous with the emulsioned wall itself and at about head height. Seen from the side it is exactly like the form of a pregnant belly. Move to the front and it entirely disappears, leaving only the faintest smudge of indistinct light and shadow. It is a disappearing trick, a phantom pregnancy, an urge or a desire dissolving and slipping away from us as we look.

How does Kapoor manage this phenomenological feat? He does it by way of illusion, and by turning objects into optical conundrums. His aesthetic depends on creating a sense of the object's immanence, and of its imminent disappearance. We are beguiled, and withheld.

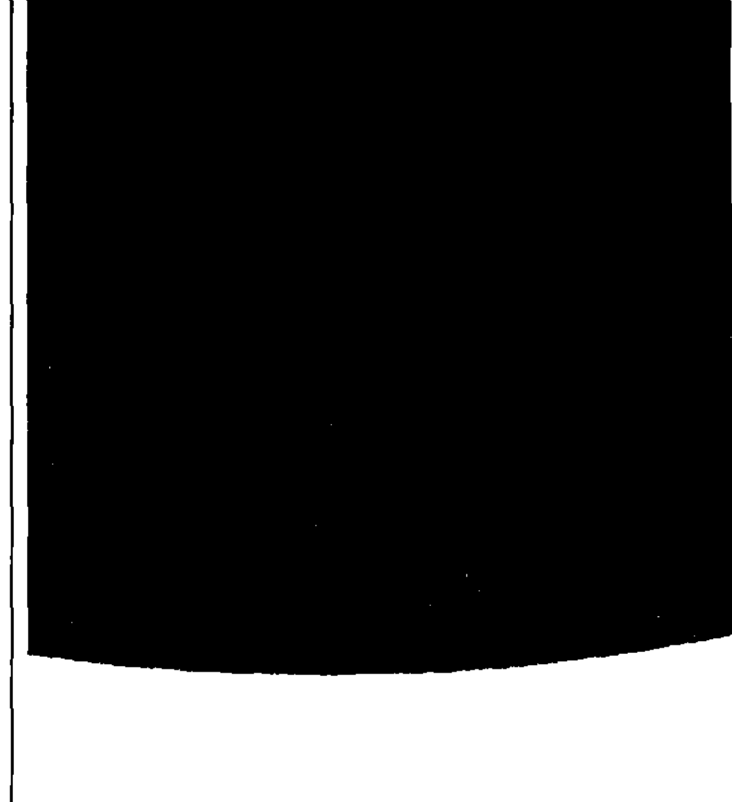
A rectangle of the deepest, darkest blue on the gallery wall turns out to be a pigment-encrusted niche, containing an even deeper, darker vent whose swelling lip we can barely discern and whose inner limit is withheld from view. A large disc of polished stainless steel, sitting on the hardwood floor of the lower gallery, has at its centre a funnel-like well, inserted through the floor — a well whose bottom is out of sight, however much one leans over to look down. It is a plug hole to infinity.

Kapoor's show is full of such anticipations, astonishments and dislocations: vertigo-inducing funnels to nowhere that suck us in with our eyes; concave distorting mirrors that catch us, looming, distorted and inverted; white, cube-like forms that have been hollowed out and whose inner contours cannot be discerned. Fascinating, astonishing and profoundly unsettling at first, the more I look, the more doubts about these illusions creep in. Away from the gallery, the more disenchanted I become.

Dragon, a work that is less apparently spectacular and less of a tease, is actually more interesting. A number of ultramarine, dusted lumps lie scattered across the floor. They look volcanic, clinkered, malleable, like the fanciful Alps in the background of landscapes by Altdorfer or Breughel. Kapoor succeeds in rendering such incidental forms anew. In a show in which so much is clean and well-formed, these gnarled accidents come as a relief.

Following Silvestrin's route through the Hayward, the high downstairs gallery is our final destination.

And then, at last, At The Edge Of The World. Almost filling the last room, this huge red space hangs above our heads, a dome of pigmented red at whose centre is a dark-red hole disappearing into blackness. I lay there on the floor and looked up. It was red all right, but astonishment didn't happen. It felt only big. Moving to the far corner of the gallery, one can see the structure of the piece, like a huge metal bowler hat hung from the ceiling. Instead of the void, I just felt blank. And worst of all, I felt it was my fault.



At The Edge Of The World, a huge inverted dome of red pigment, fills an entire room at the Hayward Gallery PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN RIDDY

Purity and deviation

THEATRE
Michael Billington

HOW does one write about Sarah Kane? Everyone, including me, so over-reacted to her first play, Blasted, that it becomes difficult to judge her with cool clarity. But my initial reaction to her new play, Cleansed, at London's Royal Court Downstairs, is that it displays far greater aesthetic control while remaining mysteriously cryptic.

Kane's theme here is the ability of love to survive fascistic, institutional cruelty. She presents us with a rural rehab centre where the apparent aim is to cure any form of social deviation. Graham, a heroin addict, is incarcerated and ritually purified. His sister, Grace, is punished for her incestuous passion by undergoing a sex-change in which she becomes her brother. The gay Carl experiences an even more extreme fate, in that tongue, hands and feet are serially removed and his body gnawed by rats. Supervising this grisly cycle of crime and punishment is the Torquemada-like figure of Tinker, a pseudo-doctor who is in total thrall to a peep-show erotic dancer.

Two parallel works come to mind: Orwell's 1984 and Pinter's The Hothouse. Like both those writers, Kane suggests the price of dissent is physical torture and that society has a vested interest in eradicating nonconformity. But invocation of those works also betrays Kane's main weakness. Where Orwell's Ministry of Love and Pinter's psychiatric institution are clearly instruments of the state, you never learn who or what lies behind Kane's hermetic chamber of horrors. If it is meant as a political metaphor, it remains an extremely shadowy one.

But it is a measure of Kane's progress as a dramatist that her play seems much more than a catalogue of cruelty. She even goes so far as to suggest that the human spirit is indestructible and that love is a possibility.

Cleansed lacks circumstantial detail in that we never get to know the source of Tinker's authority. But it shows Kane, as a dramatist, is on a learning curve and capable of a lyricism still yearning to find proper expression.

She is excellently served by James Macdonald's production which is as stylised, in its presentation of violence, as Peter Brook's Titus Andronicus. It is also astonishingly designed by Jeremy Herbert, who makes Expressionist use of tilted planes and who even, at one point, places the beaten Grace on a vertical wall as if she were a suffering medieval saint.

Suzan Sylvester as the amazing Grace, Martin Marquez as her addictive brother and Stuart McQuarrie as the barbarous Tinker, himself pining for love, all perform with total dedication. And, even if the play itself leaves too many questions unanswered, it shows Kane is a fast-developing writer whose moral rage is accompanied by a romantic yearning of which she seems frightened.

Canadian who carved freedom out of tradition

OBITUARY
Bill Reid

BILL REID, who has died aged 78, was Canada's leading artist. His carvings rivalled the finest produced by his Haida forebears of the indigenous communities of the Canadian Northwest, which had once been centres of a fine artistic tradition.

His grandmother came from Tanu, a village wiped out by disease in the 19th century but once the crowning gem of West Coast art, while his mother was from Skidegate, also on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Reid first turned to radio announcing. He had superb diction, and his voice became known across Canada during an 18-year career with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He also put Northwest Coast art back on track, first as part of a team that rescued totems from abandoned villages, and then as a practitioner of Haida carving.

Reid came to art by chance when he discovered some work by Charles Edensaw, one of his Haida ancestors. He then inherited the tools of Charles Gladstone, another ancestor. Once Reid mastered Haida iconography, he never broke its rules, no matter how innovative his work. He found freedom in tradition.

In 1958, he was commissioned to erect totem poles and two Haida houses on the University of British Columbia campus. In Skidegate, in his mother's memory, he raised a pole of unequalled beauty. He was also the first living artist to have his work displayed in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, with the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who wrote of Reid, "an incomparable artist [who] tended and revived a flame that was close to dying".

His last great work is a bronze canoe, 6m high, crowded with Haida mythic creatures. In the centre sits a calm figure with a serene expression — it is Reid, wearing a conical hat, Chilkat robe, and chief's staff, piloting this wild assemblage into unknown waters. One version of the work is at the Canadian embassy in Washington, the other at Vancouver airport.

Privately, Reid spoke little. I recall a dinner when the hostess begged: "Bill, at least say 'Ugh'." Asked to comment on an exhibit of contemporary British Columbian art, he said: "Too many Indians."

Reticence concealed gentleness and determination. Scores of people, like myself, thought of him as a best friend. Women adored him. Nothing distracted him from his goals, not even Parkinson's disease, which he suffered for 25 years. The moment he picked up a tool, his hands steadied and magic began. In some strange way, the essence of Haida art, once the lifeblood of an entire people, grew within him with an intensity deriving from primary sources and leading to daring innovations.

For example, his carving of the raven discovering mankind in a clamshell showed flawless technique, courage and freedom. It was monumental, yet only a few centimetres high. Pure Haida, but like no other Haida carving. Its intricacy, compressed power, tense relationship between man and raven, all expressed — in Reid's words — the precariousness of a society so highly structured, so highly developed. "All its parts had to fit together perfectly to function as it did," he said.

Edmund Carpenter

William Ronald Reid, carver, born February 12, 1920; died March 13, 1998

Manifesto for a mayor

Peter Preston

The Eleventh Commandment
by Jeffrey Archer
HarperCollins 342pp £16.99

MAKE me Mayor, says Lord Archer, and I won't have time to write books like this. Threat or promise? Trick or treat? A few curmudgeonly souls think it his greatest campaign weapon. But more thoughtful observers, perhaps, will want to dig deeper — to hunt for visions of the London to come in these pages.

What do they (only 342 of them this time, the old boy's flagging) tell us about the inner candidate as history beckons? Some familiar things. He remains engagingly irrepressible. Who else would take the commandment of the title ("Thou shalt not be caught") and slap it on a book in which everybody who deserves to be caught getteth his or her comeuppance? Who else would cheerily permutate characters of such vestigiality that calling them cardboard is an insult to the packaging industry? Our Mayor would be a cheeky, heedless chappie.

But there are deeper matters too. Could he work with a team? Absolutely, on this evidence. The labourings of a disciplined research squad are palpable as our hero turns (pretty endlessly) left off Wisconsin Avenue into P Street before crossing Twenty-First Street, and indeed Twenty-Third Street, on the way to Dupont Circle. And the emphasis on traffic flow sends further, hopeful signals. What works in Washington DC might work in Wandsworth.

The real questions about my lord of Grantchester, though, concern the nature and application of his Conservatism: and here one senses ideological crisis. Half of the current Archer remains unrepentantly Thatcherite, hankering for the great days of the cold war when leaders looking for an issue and thriller writers looking for a plot knew who the Enemy was. Thus, a few years from now, his tale hangs on a Zhirinovsky sort of fellow called Zerimski seizing power in Moscow and kiboshing whatever arms reduction treaties have still to be implemented.

But the other Archer — like William Hague — can't rely wholly on ancient certitudes. His main man is a US government assassin, but he salutes the flag and has a lovely wife and darling daughter: and his true villain is the berserk lady head of the CIA, J Edgar Hoover in drag.

Confused? You are probably supposed to be. This is the post-modernist Jeffrey, the one who doesn't even think that things should make sense.

Mayor Archer's London would have bounce and energy and blithe self-confidence. It would consult endlessly (35 luminaries in America and Russia are thanked) and research meticulously and would perennially seem on the point of breaking through to a better world.

In reality, though, the London we love — the city of snarl-ups and broken traffic lights and holes in the plot — would still be there beneath all the zizz. The quality of bureaucratic prose would probably slide a notch or two. Nothing you could actually believe in would happen, but you'd probably be dragged along for the ride.

I've ceased to have a settled view of Jeffrey Archer. Sometimes, when there's a setting he knows, like Iraq, he can rattle out a yarn. Sometimes, as here, the confection addles the brain. But none of that appears, in the end, to count. You can't put down the un-put-downable.

The Eleventh Commandment will doubtless be followed by the story of a lone battler for civic pride who saves a metropolis from bizarre disaster. Let's call that the Twelfth Commandment: Thou shalt continue to get away with it.

Clash of vested interests

Nicholas Lezard

Whatever Happened to the Tories?
by Ian Gilmour and Mark Garnett
Fourth Estate £8.99 pbk

IF OUR enemy's enemy is our friend, then Ian Gilmour, ex-Tory MP, should be at the top of our Christmas card lists. You may remember Dancing With Dogma from 1992, his elegant, devastating critique of Thatcherism; he wisely, if to our selfish disappointment, does not dwell too long on retreading those arguments for the final section of this book. Although you will relish his assessment of Michael Howard, "who may have been the worst Home Secretary in the two centuries the office has been in existence".

How much of the book is Gilmour's and how much is Garnett's is not clear, but there is much of the former's urbanity and sheer good prose to enjoy. This is particularly welcome in that Whatever Happened . . . is more of a continuous history of post-war British politics than its title implies. The detail he goes into is impressive, to the point where it threatens to be stultifying, but without, mercifully, ever getting so. Who now remembers "robot", the proposed combination of flotation, devaluation and blocking of sterling balances that was proposed in 1952? It came within an inch of being implemented, and would have bankrupted the country, massively increased unemployment, and, according to R A Butler, who once strongly supported it, have meant the end of the party for 40 years. (Hmm . . .)

It's Gilmour and Garnett's portrayal of the shifting balances of power and opposition that makes the book truly worthwhile. This is history from the inside which has not been corrupted by close contact. It is easy for political outsiders and know-nothings like myself to say, with Nye Bevan, that the Tories are lower than vermin (and that Labour governments are only better by default), but here the clashes of vested interests, idiots, madmen (Eden at Suez) and occasional well-meaning politicians are presented in such a way as to clarify the impossibility of good government. One almost feels sorry for the wretches. Gilmour himself makes a few appearances, in the third person like Caesar; and most memorably described, after a TV appearance, as sounding "like a man in a TV commercial about indigestion".



Caryl Phillips . . . spearheading the resurgence of Caribbean writing PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Beyond carnival and cricket

Maya Jaggi reports on the new series that loosens the colonialist grip on Caribbean writing

"*THE* Caribbean taught me to look at reality in a different way, to accept the supernatural as part of our everyday life . . . Not only is it the world which taught me to write, it's the only place where I really feel at home."

Few people would attribute these words to Gabriel García Márquez, whose fictitious Macondo mirrors the layered realities of Colombia's tropical Caribbean coastline. Yet a radical venture by the publishers Faber, seeking to remap the region where Europe first encountered the New World, may help illuminate why Márquez, among others, professes to be a Caribbean writer.

The Faber Caribbean Series, edited by Caryl Phillips, was launched last month with copious libations of rum in Trinidad and Barbados. According to Phillips, our perceptions of the region have been "trapped within the prism of the English language".

The series aims to place excellent anglophone writing — both new and classic — beside translations from French, Spanish and Dutch, and to encompass not only the islands but the Caribbean basin, with the littorals of Mexico, Central and South America yielding their own literary gems. It blows apart the colonial map of the "West Indies" — the pink bits tied to London rather than their neighbours — and assails the reductive view of Caribbean culture as carnival and cricket. "One literature in several languages", as the St Lucian Nobel laureate Derek Walcott exulted.

Faber's initiative coincides with growing international acclaim for the region's writers. As the quincentenary of Columbus's "discovery" was ambivalently marked in 1992, Europe's Nobel, Goncourt and Cervantes literary prizes were monopolised by Walcott, Martinique's Patrick Chamoiseau and Cuba's Dulce Maria Loynaz. Three of the 10 authors shortlisted for this year's £100,000 Dublin-based Impac award are Caribbean (Earl Lovelace, Jamaica Kincaid and David Dabydeen). Recent prize-winners also include Pauline Melville, Robert Antoni, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Fred D'Aguiar.

With publishers moving in (autumn catalogues bill the Guyanese Oonya Kempadoo as "the new Arundhati Roy"), there is evidence of the Caribbean becoming the "new India" as a perceived source of innovative, world-class fiction.

Given a dearth of local publishers, the islands' writers have always had to leave to be recognised. So there was excitement that a major British publisher (backed by the BWIA airline and the University of the West Indies) launched this series "at home". While books usually reach the tiny and "marginal" Caribbean market at prohibitive prices, Faber is selling the series there at half price to remedy what its chairman, Matthew Evans, said was "an absolutely ridiculous situation where Caribbean readers don't get to read their own writers".

BUT DOES it make sense to speak of one literature encompassing such ethnic and linguistic diversity, over writers in a far-flung diaspora? There are, indeed, astonishing echoes between the four launch titles: The Fragrance Of Guava, García Márquez's conversations with a friend; Palace Of The Peacock, the Guyanese Wilson Harris's visionary classic of 1960; A View From The Mangrove, stories by the Cuban Antonio Benítez-Rojo reaching back to the Conquest; and Windward Heights, the Guadeloupan Maryse Condé's transposing of Emily Brontë to the Antilles.

According to Benítez-Rojo, the Caribbean is "one of the least known regions of the world". He explains: "Caribbean history is lost, except as written by planters or Europeans. There are few slave texts or records of the indentured labourers from China, India. The only thing we have is fragments."

In his Nobel lecture, Walcott evoked the image of a broken vase reassembled with infinite love. "Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary," he said. A polyphony of voices, a piecing together, a concern with the rhythm of language, are recurring concerns in this writing. Magical realism — used by the Cuban Alejo Carpentier in the 1930s before García Márquez alighted on it — is also a common technique for overlaying the mundane with Galician or Amerindian or African spirituality.

With Robert Antoni, this mosaic extends to language itself. "Language is in a constant state of re-invention. I squeeze everything I can into it, making it as dense as possible. So much is said about the Caribbean being made up of the African, East Indian, French Creole, Spanish. But I say to be Caribbean is to be all those things together. They're all present in me, like a roomful of spirits."

Philips says, "It's impossible to sum up the repeating fluidity and hybridity and dynamism of Caribbean culture in a sentence. It's a European conceit to try to define yourself by exclusion, by defining the Other. What's dynamic and energising about the Caribbean is that they reject that form of definition. 'Impurity' is the norm here.

"The efforts you see now in Europe and the US to create a multi-cultural society have been going on here for five centuries. The literature reflects this; it transgresses boundaries with unselfconscious ease and eloquence. Multiculturalism here is not what it means in Britain — one culture dominant and 'tolerating' the others. It's different facets existing in an individual."

The Fragrance of Guava, Palace of the Peacock, Windward Heights and A View from the Mangrove are published by Faber, all at £7.99. For a special discount price of £25 for the four, contact CultureShop (see ad below)

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

The Good Nazi: The Life And Lies of Albert Speer, by Dan van der Vat (Phoenix, £8.99)

WHAT should have been said at Nuremberg: "Speer was not an absent-minded, eyes-averted, amoral non-spectator of Nazi anti-Semitism but an active participant in ruining the lives, to put it no more strongly, of 75,000 Berlin Jews . . . The eviction of the Jews does not put Speer on the bridge of the SS Holocaust . . . but he was in the first-class saloon, driving steerage passengers out into the gathering storm."

Terminal Architecture, by Martin Pawley (Reaktion, £12.95)

PAWLEY has a modest thesis — nearly all modern architecture has got it wrong. What matters is not that the frontages of our buildings look Victorian but that their interiors are appropriate to the Information Age. "The hidden networks that provide us with transport, energy, nutrients and information are the real riches of the modern world." Go on, demolish your workplace!

A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac, by Edward Shorter (John Wiley, £13.99)

A LARGE part of the story is about how huge chunks of psychiatry become medicalised. The "mad" person is gradually becoming just another patient. Mental illness is ceasing to be a stigma. Psychiatrists "had progressed from being the healers of the therapeutic asylum to serving as gatekeepers for Prozac". And the clubs are full of pharmacological hedonists. Out of your mind, or what?

The Roy Strong Diaries, 1967-1987 (Phoenix, £8.99)

"*A MAJOR* TV profile interview with Bernard Levin . . . Levin only interviews the likes of Isaiah Berlin and Lord Rothschild, so one was cast into quite a league." But the V&A's one-time director will soon only be material for a taxidermist. Voluntary Donations at the door. Dear me, how fortunate that one's diaries keep one's name before the public. If one can drop enough names — the bitchier the better — one's own is sure to endure.

Disraeli, by Robert Blake (Prion, £16)

"*THE* British People," wrote Dizzy, "being subject to fogs and possessing a powerful Middle Class require grave statesmen". Disraeli, fortunately, was never that, and this great biography is as fine a political life as you can find. It is 800-odd pages long but it was not a thin life. Are there any living British politicians worth 800 pages? I think not. But that won't stop 'em.

His Arms Are Full of Broken Things, by P B Parris (Penguin, £7.99)

P B PARRIS is an American born, she says, with an English soul. Charlotte Mew, the subject of this "imaginary autobiography", suffered in Victorian society with her passionate, poetic soul. One day she meets Thomas Hardy, her King of Wessex. Will these English souls be able to admit that they are in love?

Ambassador for the Bad Bloke

Cressida Connolly

Intimacy
by Hanif Kureishi
Faber 118pp £9.99

THANKS to Nick Hornby, the Good Bloke has a powerful advocate in contemporary literature. His characters may be flawed, obsessive and immature, but they're essentially nice guys. In the boxing ring of modern fiction, Hornby dons a slightly grubby, faintly fluffy white robe, while Hanif Kureishi is in the opposite corner in skimpy black polyester. He is the ambassador of the Bad Bloke, the champion of the idle and intoxicated, an apologist for the morally lax. None of his protagonists has ever been nice, and Jay, narrator of Intimacy, is the worst yet, a man who abandons his two sons and their mother for no good reason. Intimacy is a misnomer; this book is about the horror of proximity.

Anyone with even a scrap of rectitude could not fail to find Intimacy a repugnant little book, not least in view of the open secret that Kureishi's own life is known to mirror the events he describes. To read about a man who masturbates over the soiled underwear of the woman he plans to leave the following morning — a woman he is too cowardly to have informed of his imminent departure — is profoundly disagreeable. The reader knows he's going before his family does, thereby inviting unwelcome collusion. Feminist critics will have a field day with its misogyny. To dismiss it altogether is an inviting prospect, but the uncomfortable truth is that Intimacy is not without merit. It affords a unique glimpse of the male psyche in crisis. If, as John Updike says, the duty of a writer is to deliver what he thinks is true, then Kureishi has succeeded; the honesty here is excoriating.

Immaturity is to blame for everything that is wrong with Jay, including a self-centredness that would be breathtaking even in a toddler. A mark of Jay's egomania is his inflated sense of his own uniqueness. About his girlfriend he notes: "Unlike me, she doesn't constantly lucubrate on the splendours and depths of her own mind." He despises her practicality. The fact that her full-time job, two young children and a slob like him around the house doesn't allow a lot of time for lucubration never crosses his mind.

"Is it like this for everyone? Is this all you get?" wails Jay. Yes, and yes again. To be married with young children and not to think sometimes of walking out would be deeply unnatural. It is only Jay's lack of maturity that makes him believe that he is alone in such a fantasy.



Hanif Kureishi: a callousness verging on the psychotic

There are occasional flashes of humour in this book — about reading in bed, he says: "I like books but I don't want to get undressed for one" — but, alone among Kureishi's output, it is completely devoid of irony. This, perversely, is a dramatic plus: the dawning sense that he means it, that he truly believes himself a superior being unnaturally constrained by the fetters of family life, is what makes Intimacy so compelling.

As the novel progresses, the tone of contemplative ruefulness gives way to bitter carping. One paragraph rejoices in only two words: "Cheerio, bitch". About a woman who has borne him two sons, such callousness verges on the psychotic.

Indeed, this book has a tremendous future as a therapeutic tool for relationship counsellors and psychologists: a first-hand account by a *puer eternis* with both Don Juan and negative mother complexes — as well as what looks like a borderline personality — will be meat and drink to shrinks. There is, of course, another woman: no self-respecting, middle-aged breakdown would be complete without a new bird. Adultery is as close as he gets to adult. Jay's world-view sees pleasure as an ultimate value, more important than loyalty or courage.

For all his lucubration on the depths of his own mind, Jay has no interior life at all. If he did, he would not have to act out his every whim. "Wisdom is to know the value of what we have," Jay's happily married friend Asif advises him. This one sentence aside, wisdom is spectacularly absent from the novel. In place of love, compassion and insight, Intimacy gives us desire, indifference and a relentless, unredeeming honesty. As a worthy dispatch from the front line of Bad Blokedom, it will be hard for another book to begin to come close.

The art of dying in style

Barbara Trapido

Before I Say Goodbye
by Ruth Picardie
Penguin 116pp £5.99

RUTH PICARDIE was a 32-year-old journalist; a happily married mother of one-year-old twins, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. The disease spread quickly into her bones, her liver, her lungs, and ultimately, her brain. She was dead within the year. During this difficult time, she wrote a much acclaimed column for The Observer's Life magazine, of which her sister Justine is editor. This book is a compilation of those columns, along with additions by her sister and her husband, Matt Seaton, and with selections from her e-mail correspondence with close friends and letters from Observer readers, whose hearts and minds Ruth touched.

There is currently a mania for self-help manuals and look-at-me journalism; Ruth raised these trite and overworked genres to a higher plane. Against terrible odds, she processed the art of dying without losing her love of style. In the extraordinary surges of energy that spit and crackle over her pages, in her emotional honesty, in her ability to place herself both inside and outside her subject — the subject of her own dying — and in her instinct to go for the telling detail rather than for the soothing generality, Ruth reveals a talent that might well have transformed her into a novelist. In facing down the fact of dying, she exhibits an ability to grow beyond herself as a writer — an ability which her dying has now rendered mute. This is the heart-rending paradox at the centre of her book.

For her friends and family, it is equally paradoxical that Ruth, more than anybody, was possessed of an extraordinary zeal for living. "I'm just so surprised and shocked," writes her HIV-positive e-mail friend from New York, "to find a healthy, big ride of a bird like you . . . marked with the hand of Cain."

Ruth's husband, in his sensitive yet open-eyed conclusion, observes that her becoming pregnant with twins seemed characteristic of her generosity and greed for life. "So typical of you," says her cyber friend, "never doing anything by half measures. You don't have some normal little cancer; you have a Terminator machine."

Matt says he thought of Ruth as his "Amazon". Everything about her was larger-than-life. So where has all that "spirit, energy and force of personality" gone, asks Matt. "Can it be that it simply leaches away entropically?" By March 1997, the cancer had entered Ruth's bones, but she is still on her bike. "Cycled to Bayswater to interview dull Australian feminist," she writes. Then cycled to Guy's for treatment, than cycled to Dickins & Jones for 'personal beauty consultation'."

Ruth presents herself with an almost unceasing, sparky irony, as a fast-track, post-feminist fashion groupie and chocoholic. As Matt observes, if she ever thought of her body as "friend-turned-assassin", she never admitted as much. "She just spent more on clothes and face creams."

She sends up her own "retail therapy" approach to terminal illness with the disclosure that, having got herself and Matt a last-ditch honeymoon replay weekend at Gravetye Manor as a freebie, she has straight away blown £425 on underwear in Agent Provocateur, because she has saved them so much money, and "what the fuck," she writes, "I'm dying".

She processes rage with blackly comic bravado, and the unbearable loss of her future with an economic, Newspeak bathos that goes direct to her readers' tear ducts. "I like cybercancer better than phone-cancer," she writes at one point, "[it] makes me less prone to weeping." As a result, her moments of quiet straightness are all the more breathtaking — as in, "I won't be there to clap when my beloved babies learn to write their names." Equally searing are Matt's very straight accounts of the dementia, the stumbling, bovine passivity and loneliness of her last hours.

Ruth is gruesomely perceptive about people's various responses to her illness — some squeamish, some sycophantic. "I'm sick of being everybody's favourite cripple," she writes. She is funny about her new-found popularity. After some "suspicious no-shows for the children's first birthday party", there are suddenly no windows in her lunch diary. A few people, she observes, "reckon that cripples can help them get to heaven". Matt tells us that she made abortive ledger-lists — A-lists and B-lists — of those to be banned from her funeral.

She and her HIV-positive friend are *highly* readable on funerals. Ruth speculates that, thanks to drug-induced eating binges, she'll need a "size 16 urn". He wants a full-blown epic, the "Bayreuth of burials". She is good on medic-speak and social-worker speak — as when her "care needs" are assessed by a bad speller with "two-inch-long nails".

Some of the strangers who write to Ruth are terrific. Others use terms like "inner peace". I bless the stranger who remembers Ruth depicted, post-childbirth, in the Guardian wearing a Ghost skirt and Birkenstocks. Will somebody please bronze those Birkenstocks?

Paradise poisoned

Mark Cocker

DURING the 1990s the weather patterns in Spain's Andalucia read like a parable from the book of Genesis. During the early part of the decade it experienced several years of drought. I remember scouring a huge area east of the Guadalquivir river in the spring of 1995 and being unable to find a single body of fresh water. One lake normally smothered with waterbirds had been converted to a dusty, ochre-stained basin about the size of a small town. By the end some residents were allowed just an hour of water a day and there were dire predictions of environmental catastrophe.

Yet during the past three years matters have swung full circle and last winter was the wettest on record, the rains sweeping away roads and bridges. This created new problems for the people of Andalucia, but for the province's premier wildlife reserve, Doñana National Park, it has been blissful. When we visited this vast area of freshwater marsh it had drawn deeply on those life-giving rains and looked full to satiation. Lagoons stretched to a distant horizon and splashing through them were the wild horses of the *marismas*, doubled in size by enormous reflections so they looked like gleaming silver or chestnut monsters. The entire region was steeped in green and the flowers were extraordinary. One species could carpet a whole area for hundreds of metres, turning it bright pink; elsewhere they might all be golden yellow.

It is the scale of Doñana that hits you. At 180,000 hectares this wetland is almost twice the size of the combined 147 reserves of Britain's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, itself the largest environmental non-governmental organisation in Europe. During an excursion our vehicle bumped for hours across a network of tracks, yet we saw only one tiny section of the park.



ILLUSTRATION. ANN HOBDAY

However, we covered sufficient ground to find clearings grazed by more than 50 wild boar, many sows accompanied by stripy piglets no more than a few days old. Above one panorama of pines we saw scores of black kites wheeling through the midday heat-haze. Turning leisurely among them was a Spanish imperial eagle, one of the world's rarest raptors and, together with the Spanish lynx, the key flagship species for Doñana. Literally every bush seemed to be bursting with the endless sobbing of nightingales. It seems shameful to admit, but we were growing weary of Europe's most celebrated songster.

Doñana looked and felt like a park in its absolute prime. How extraordinary now to reflect that within hours of these scenes the Guadiamar river was inundated with 5,000,000 cubic metres of toxic waste from a Swedish-Canadian owned mine just a few kilometres upstream. Residues of zinc, copper, silver and lead are already taking a toll of the area's fish and other aquatic life. One shudders to think of the implications once these corpses wash up in the park itself, as some undoubtedly will.

Black kites, for instance, constantly patrol riverbanks and beaches for dead fish, as indeed will wild boar. Even Doñana's regal symbols, the lynx and eagle, are not above scavenging, particularly when they have young to feed. Some of the largest breeding colonies of herons are located close to areas badly hit by the toxic sludge. Twice a year millions of birds migrate through the park and in winter it is home to 250,000 wildfowl. Although the Spanish government is fending off suggestions that Doñana will be seriously affected, the true impact will only be known after months and probably years. But even now it looks like some nightmare visitation straight out of Exodus.

Chess Leonard Barden

RULES of the £3,000 Onyx Grand Prix, the individual league for Britain's 10,000-strong army of weekend congress chessplayers, are framed to make it hard to win two years running. The defending champion starts from scratch, while the rest of the top 20 finishers in 1997 score bonus points for 1998.

In 24 years of the Grand Prix, only Tony Miles and John Nunn in early contests with different rules, and more recently the exceptional Michael Adams, have managed to defy the handicapper. But now it looks as if the GM Mark Hebden, who in 1997 equalled Adams's record 200/200 winning Grand Prix total, plans to join this rare élite.

In March Hebden won the Midland Championship with 6/6; in April, he took the Surrey Open with 7/7. Weekend congresses are played on the Swiss system, a cross between an all-play-all and a knockout, rewarding maximum scores which few can motivate themselves to achieve.

Hebden has already almost caught his rivals and is in second place behind Jim Plaskett. The race is close, and the lead has changed hands three times in a month. There could also be an upset in the women's Prixette, where Sheila Jackson, an eight-time previous winner whose last success was in 1985, has a healthy lead over the favourite, Susan Lalic.

Hebden's most interesting game was against Mike Basman, the debunker of orthodox chess openings, who usually starts 1 h3 and 2 g4 or its black equivalent. His opponents know what to expect and have virtually a free hand in deciding their own piece and pawn formation, yet here once again he stands well after 15 moves following Hebden's cautious knight development at d2 and e2.

M Hebden v M Basman

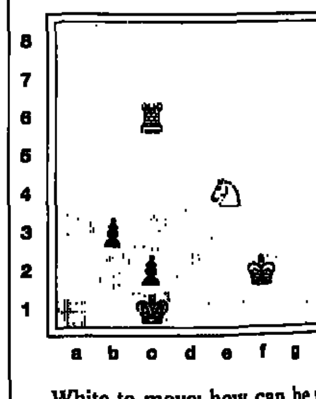
1 d4 h6 2 e4 g5 3 c3 d6 4 Bc4 Nf6 5 Nd2 c6 6 Bb3 Bg4 7 Ne2 Nd7 8 f3 Bh5 9 Ng3 Bg6 10 Nc4 Qc7 11 Qe2 d5 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 0-0 0-0-0 14 a4 e6 15 a5 Be7 16 Ne4 e5 Provoking complications.

17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Qxe5 **19 Qc4 f5 20 Nf2 Bd6** Qc7 is simpler.

21 f4!? A surprise which, as the game goes, gains control of the useful f4 square and leaves Black struggling. Hebden planned to meet Nxf4 by 22 Bxf4 Qxf4 23 Qe6+ Kb8 24 g3 winning the g6 bishop, but later he noticed the resource 24 ... Qf3! 25 Qxg6 Bc5 threatening Rd2 with good counterplay.

gxf4?! **22 Nd3 Qe7 23** Bxf4 **Rhe8 24 Rae1 Qc7 25** Bxd6 **Qxd6 26 Rxe8 Bxe8 27** Qd4 **Kb8 28 Re1 Nc7 29 Qxd6** Rxd6 **30 Nf4 c5 31 Rd1 Rxd1+** 32 **Bxd1 b5 33 axb6ep** axb6 34 **Kf2** With two isolated pawns and the WK able to invade the black defences via e5, this endgame is a struggle for Black. In the sequel Hebden won the h6 pawn while the BN voyaged to distant parts, including b2 and a1, before White's K pawn marched up the board for a 59-move win.

No 2523



White to move; how can he win? Black is a rook and knight down but his pawns are close to promotion. Harder than usual, and you'll need board and men. As a clue, the main variation ends with White checkmating on his seventh turn.

No 2522: 1 Qa4+! forces a draw after Qc2 2 Qd7+ and 3 Qxh3 or Ke2 2 Qg4+ or Ke1 2 Qh4+ or Kc1 2 Qa3+. 1 Qg4+?? Qe2+ is a losing blunder.

Quick crossword no. 418

Across

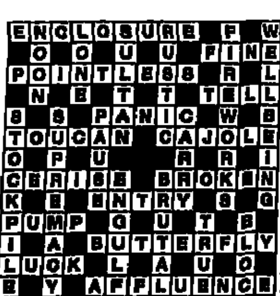
1 Confused, unruly (10)
7 Weapon store — publication (8)
8 Entrance — for spectators? (4)
9 Ride — fall (4)
10 Lack of success (7)
12 Bell-ringing (11)
14 Feathers (7)
16 Dross left on liquid (4)
19 Unhearing (4)
20 Example (8)
21 Australian wind instrument (10)

Down

1 Plan — conscription (5)
2 Arena (7)
3 Track — close in — attack — bird (4)
4 Lift (8)
5 Lawful (5)
6 Stalwart (6)
11 Tall, lanky and awkward (8)
12 One who visits — or telephones (6)
13 Fruit grove (7)
15 Plain clothes — Muslim lawyer (5)
17 Showing excessive male pride (5)
18 Russian ruler (4)

Last week's solution





Bridge Zia Mahmood

INDIVIDUAL contests, sadly, are uncommon nowadays, but the Generali Masters Individual event is unique. Eighty of the world's top players — 52 men, 28 women — are invited to a tournament in which each will play two hands with each of the others to produce a single winner. There was good and bad news at the start of this year's Masters, The good news was that the tournament would take place on the beautiful island of Corsica. The seriously bad news was that in the week before the tournament the island's governor had been shot in the hotel that was to stage the event, so we had to move to a different setting. More bad news: the weather was almost as miserable as in Britain. We were not actually flooded, but only because Corsica is a mountainous island.

The rest was all good, though — the event is always played in a tremendous spirit, and the element of chance that is so much a part of individual events ensures that everybody starts with a more or less equal shot at the title. Paul Chemla, who produced a terrific burst of speed over the closing stages to clinch the title this year, modestly claimed merely to have been leading when the tournament was interrupted. Reverting to form, he then thanked his 51 partners for playing either well, or at any rate not badly enough! Could you be an Individual champion? The opponents are vulnerable, you are not, and these are your cards as South:

♠J954 ♥AKJ4 ♦K ♣K632

You open 1NT. Yes, I know it's not ideal, but experience shows that with a strange partner, it's a good idea to open 1NT as often as you can. If it comes to the worst, just put the four of hearts in with the diamonds as you table the dummy. West on your left bids two clubs to show the majors, and your partner jumps to three diamonds, which is natural and forcing. East joins in with three spades, and you double. West passes, and your partner removes your penalty double to 3NT. What would you do now? This has been the bidding:

South	West	North	East
You			
1NT	2♣	3♦	3♠
Dble	Pass	3NT	Pass
?			

This was the full deal:

North
♠ None
♥ 10 5
♦ A 10 6 5 2
♣ A Q 8 7 5 4

West
♠ A Q 10 7 6
♥ Q 9 8 7 6 2
♦ J 7
♣ None

East
♠ K 8 4 3
♥ 3
♦ Q 9 8 4 3
♣ J 10 9

South
♠ J 9 5 4
♥ A K J 4
♦ K
♣ K 6 3 2

The opponents' bidding, and your partner's reluctance to defend three spades doubled, should indicate to you that 3NT won't be a good contract. North is likely to have no spades at all, so your J954 won't be much of a stopper. Moreover West has shown long hearts, so your partner is not likely to have many cards in that suit. The chances are very good that he has a club suit, so I think you should bid four clubs at this point.

If you followed this reasoning, well done — you are going to be richly rewarded. Left-hand opponent will compete with four spades, and partner will jump to six clubs, 0

Football Scottish Premier Division: Celtic 2 St Johnstone 0



Last hurrah: Jansen is held aloft by his jubilant players 48 hours before quitting PHOTO: STUART FRANKLIN

Jansen spoils Celtic's party

Patrick Glenn at Celtic Park

MOST people were on the pitch; they knew it was all over. Many of the thousands who danced on the turf after the 2-0 victory over St Johnstone last Saturday could still hardly believe it: that the Glaswegian side had at last, after 10 years, wrested the championship from Rangers.

They probably experienced similar disbelief 48 hours later when Celtic's head coach Wim Jansen announced that he would be exercising the escape clause in his three-year contract and would leave after only one season.

Pressed for a statement about his future immediately after the title triumph, the Dutchman insisted he would say nothing. But on Monday it became abundantly clear what he had been thinking all along. "You can say I have had different opinions than the management," Jansen said on holiday in Portugal.

Celtic's managing director, Fergus McCann, who is facing calls to resign from angry fans, retorted that he would almost certainly have sacked Jansen if he had not resigned because of the Dutchman's reluctance to commit himself to the long-term future of the club.

Celtic's captain Tom Boyd had said that the players wanted Jansen to stay, a sentiment endorsed by Jackie McNamara, the Scottish Player of the Year.

At times last Saturday Celtic looked as unconvincing as their former coach in his claims to be undecided about his future. Indeed, they had appeared tense throughout several games during the run-in.

Even Henrik Larsson's stunning goal in the third minute was not enough to confirm that it would be a gala day against St Johnstone, who still had the opportunity of taking the last place in next season's Uefa Cup.

There were enough scary moments for the Celtic faithful before the substitute Harald Brattbakk's clincher in the 73rd minute to fill the stadium with a strange silence. The cause was not so much St Johnstone's threat, more Celtic's own hesitancy.

The two-goal lead established by Rangers at Tannadice did nothing to calm their nerves. Victory for the old enemy meant that Celtic needed to win.

Larsson's goal was fit to win a championship. The move started with Alan Main rushing from the St Johnstone goal to clear the ball. He drove it straight to Lambert, the most composed and accomplished player on the field, and the midfielder chested it down and played it forward to Larsson.

The Swede came in from the left, beat two defenders and with his right foot hit a wonderful 25-yard drive, the ball drawing right-to-left to evade the diving Main and hurtle into the left corner of the net.

Brattbakk came on for the diligent but tiring Simon Donnelly, and when Boyd carried the ball out of defence and released McNamara down the right the Norwegian glided into a large hole in the visiting defence. McNamara delivered the perfect cross, allowing Brattbakk, without breaking stride, to sweep the ball right-footed past Main from eight yards.

Rangers do not often leave the field feeling like people who have been burgled, but their woe was deepened during their 2-1 win by the ordering-off of the German midfielder Jorg Albertz, who will now miss Saturday's Scottish Cup final against Hearts.

For the Rangers manager Walter Smith and captain Richard Gough it was an unhappy way to mark their last league match for the club; and worse may follow. If Rangers fail to lift themselves for the Cup final, Smith's last season may end without silverware.

Rangers won nine consecutive championships, from 1989-97, but Celtic's triumph means that they still share that Scottish record thanks to their 1966-74 run.

"It hasn't just been recent games which have cost us the championship," said Smith. "Celtic have capitalised on that this season but, when I look back, we've done the same to other teams over the years."

● Bolton Wanderers lost their battle for Premiership survival when a 2-0 defeat by Chelsea at Stamford Bridge sent Colin Todd's industrious but limited team plunging down into First Division for the second time in three seasons. They join Crystal Palace and Barnsley, who were already relegated. Everton, another struggling side, gained a point against Coventry to survive on goal difference.

Results and final league tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa 1, Arsenal 0; Barnsley 0, Man Utd 2; Blackburn 1, Newcastle Utd 0; Chelsea 2, Bolton 0; Crystal Palace 1, Sheff Wed 0; Derby 1, Liverpool 0, Everton 1, Coventry 1; Leeds Utd 1, Wimbledon 1; Tottenham 1, Southampton 1; West Ham 4, Leicester 3.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
Division One: Play-offs semi-final, first leg: Ipswich 0, Charlton 1; Sheff Utd 2, Sunderland 1

Division Two: Play-offs semi-final, first leg: Bristol Rovers 3, Northampton 1; Fulham 1, Grimsby 1.

Division Three: Play-offs semi-final, first leg: Barnet 1, Colchester 0; Scarboro 1, Torquay 3.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Premier Division: Celtic 2, St Johnstone 0; Dundee Utd 1, Rangers 2; Hearts 2, Dunfirmline 0; Kilmarnk 1, Hibernian 1; Motherwell 1, Aberdeen 2.

First Division: Falkirk 0, Airdrie 1; Gr Morton 1, Stirling A 0; Partick 1, Ayr 3; Raith 2, Hamilton 1; St Mirren 1, Dundee 0.

Second Division: Brechin 1, Clydebank 6; Clyde 0, Stranraer 1; East Fife 0, Forfar 1, Livingston 1, Inverness CT 2, Queen Sth 1, Stenhousemuir 0.

Third Division: Albion 4, Montrose 2; Alloa 1, Berwick 0; Arbroath 1, Queens Pk 1; Dumbarton 2, Cowdenbeath 3; Ross Co 5, East Stirling 2.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Arsenal	38	23	9	6	68	33	78
Man Utd	38	23	8	7	73	26	77
Liverpool	38	18	11	9	68	42	65
Chelsea	38	20	3	15	71	43	63
Leeds	38	17	8	13	57	46	59
Blackburn	38	16	10	12	57	52	58
Aston Villa	38	17	6	15	49	48	57
West Ham	38	16	8	14	56	57	56
Derby	38	16	7	15	52	49	55
Leicester	38	13	14	11	51	41	53
Coventry	38	12	16	10	46	44	52
Southampton	38	14	6	18	50	55	48
Newcastle	38	11	11	16	35	44	44
Tottenham	38	11	11	16	44	56	44
Wimbledon	38	10	14	14	34	46	44
Sheff Wed	38	12	8	18	52	67	44
Everton	38	9	13	16	41	56	40
Bolton	38	9	13	16	41	61	40
Barnsley	38	10	5	23	37	82	35
Crystal Palace	38	8	9	21	37	71	33

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Nottm Forest	46	28	10	8	82	42	94
Middlesbrough	46	27	10	9	77	41	91
Sunderland	46	26	12	8	86	50	90
Charlton	46	26	10	10	80	49	88
Ipswich	46	23	14	9	77	43	83
Sheff Utd	46	19	17	10	69	54	74
Birmingham	46	19	17	10	60	35	74
Stockport	46	19	8	19	71	69	65
Wolverhampton	46	18	11	17	57	53	65
West Brom	46	16	13	17	50	56	61
Crewe	46	18	5	23	58	65	59
Oxford Utd	46	16	10	20	60	64	58
Bradford	46	14	15	17	46	59	57
Tranmere	46	14	14	18	54	57	56
Norwich	46	14	13	19	52	69	55
Huddersfield	46	14	11	21	50	72	53
Bury	46	11	19	16	42	58	52
Swindon	46	14	10	22	42	73	52
Port Vale	46	13	10	23	56	66	49
Portsmouth	46	13	10	23	51	63	49
QPR	46	10	19	17	51	63	49
Man City	46	12	12	22	56	57	48
Stoke	46	11	13	22	44	74	46
Reading	46	11	9	26	39	78	42

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Watford	46	24	16	6	67	41	88
Bristol City	46	25	10	11	69	39	85
Grimsby	46	19	15	12	55	37	72
Northampton	46	18	17	11	52	37	71
Bristol Rovers	46	20	10	16	70	64	70
Fulham	46	20	10	16	60	43	70
Wrexham	46	18	16	12	55	51	70
Gillingham	46	19	13	14	52	47	70
Bournemouth	46	18	12	16	57	52	66
Chesterfield	46	16	17	13	46	44	65
Wigan	46	17	11	18	64	66	62
Blackpool	46	17	11	18	59	67	62
Oldham	46	15	16	15	62	54	61
Wycombe	46	14	18	14	51	53	60
Preston	46	15	14	17	56	56	59
York	46	14	17	15	52	58	59
Luton	46	14	15	17	60	64	57
Millwall	46	14	13	19	43	54	55
Walsall	46	14	12	20	43	52	54
Burnley	46	13	13	20	55	65	52
Brentford	46	11	17	18	50	71	50
Plymouth	46	12	13	21	55	70	49
Carlisle	46	12	8	26	57	73	44
Southend	46	11	10	25	47	79	43

Division Three

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Notts County	46	29	12	5	82	43	99
Macclesfield	46	23	13	10	63	44	82
Lincoln City	46	20	15	11	60	51	75
Colchester	46	21	11	14	72	60	74
Torquay	46	21	11	14	68	59	74
Scarborough	46	19	15	12	67	58	72
Barnet	46	19	13	14	61	51	70
Scunthorpe	46	19	12	15	56	52	69
Rotherham	46	16	19	11	67	61	67
Peterborough	46	18	13	15	63	51	67
Leyton Orient	46	19	12	15	62	47	66
Mansfield	46	16	17	13	64	55	65
Shrewsbury	46	16	13	17	61	62	61
Chester	46	17	10	19	60	61	61
Exeter	46	15	15	16	68	63	60
Cambridge Utd	46	14	18	14	63	57	60
Hartlepool	46	12	23	11	61	53	59
Rochdale	46	17	7	22	56	55	58
Darlington	46	14	12	20	56	72	54
Swansea	46	13	11	22	49	62	50
Cardiff	46	9	23	14	48	52	50
Hull	46	11	8	27	56	83	41
Brighton	46	6	17	23	38	66	35
Doncaster	46	4	8	34	30	113	20

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Celtic	36	22	8	6	64	24	74
Rangers	36	21	9	6	76	38	72
Hearts	36	19	10	7	70	46	67
Kilmarnock	36	13	11	12	40	52	50
St Johnstone	36	13	9	14	38	42	48
Aberdeen	36	9	12	15	39	53	39
Dundee Utd	36	8	13	15	43	51	37
Dunfermline	36	8	13	15	43	68	37
Motherwell	36	9	7	20	46	64	34
Hibernian	36	6	12	18	38	59	30

Division One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Dundee	36	20	10	6	52	24	70
Falkirk	36	19	8	9	56	41	65
Raith	36	17	9	10	51	33	60
Airdrie	36	16	12	8	42	35	60
Gr Morton	36	12	10	14	47	48	46
St Mirren	36	11	8	17	41	53	41
Ayr	36	10	10	16	40	56	40
Hamilton	36	9	11	16	43	56	38
Partick	36	8	12	16	45	55	36
Stirling	36	8	10	18	40	56	34

Division Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Stranraer	36	18	7	11	62	44	61
Clydebank	36	16	12	8	48	31	60
Livingston	36	16	11	9	56	40	59
Queen of South	36	15	9	12	57	51	54
Inverness Cal	36	13	10	13	65	51	49
East Fife	36	14	6	16	51	59	48
Forfar	36	12	10	14	51	61	46
Clyde	36	10	12	14	40	53	42
Stenhousemuir	36	10	10	16	44	53	40
Brechin	36	7	11	18	42	73	32

Division Three

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Alloa	36	24	4	8	78	39	76
Arbroath	36	20	8	8	67	39	68
Ross County	36	19	10	7	71	36	67
East Stirling	36	17	6	13	50	48	57
Albion	36	13	5	18	60	73	44
Berwick	36	10	12	14	47	55	42
Queen's Park	36	10	11	15	42	55	41
Cowdenbeath	36	12	2	22	33	57	38
Montrose	36	10	8	18	53	80	38
Dumbarton	36	7	10	19	42	61	31

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Back biting sparks a new round of probes

RUGBY UNION officials at Twickenham and Newcastle have launched separate investigations into allegations that the Newcastle prop Paul Van Zandvliet bit the England flanker Neil Back on the head. The incident took place during last week's ill-tempered Premiership match between the Tyneside club and Leicester at Gateshead Stadium. Back's own club, Leicester, initially said they, too, would look into the matter, but later announced that they would not be lodging a complaint. However, with this alleged incident coming so soon after the Bath prop Kevin Yates was banned for six months for biting off part of Simon Fenn's ear, Twickenham is keen to appear tough on indiscipline.

Newcastle meanwhile closed in on the Premiership title with a tense 20-15 victory over Bath. If Saracens in second place, fail to defeat Northampton in their final game on Thursday, the Tyneside club, with one game to come at Harlequins on Sunday, will be crowned champions.

ENGLAND skipper Alan Shearer has been summoned to face the Football Association after a controversial challenge on Neil Lennon in the match between Newcastle United and Leicester City at Filbert Street last month. A statement said: "An FA commission will consider an alleged breach of the rules by Shearer following an incident in the match." Although Shearer has not been charged with any offence, the FA believes it is in the interest of the game that he should be given an opportunity to explain what happened.

INTERNAZIONALE beat Lazio 3-0 in the all-Italian final of the Uefa Cup at Paris's Parc des Princes. Lazio reserved their worst form for this encounter. They were outperformed in every department of the game as their Milanese opponents lifted the trophy for the third time in eight years. The night, though, belonged to the club's South American stars, Chilean Ivan Zamorano, Argentina's Javier Zanetti and Ronaldo of Brazil, who shared the goals between them.

THE preliminary rounds of the Benson & Hedges Cup ended with holders Surrey convincingly making the quarter-finals along with Leicestershire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Durham, Kent, Middlesex and Essex. A notable absentee from the last eight are Warwickshire, who failed to make the knock-out stage in spite of beating Nottinghamshire by 5 runs in the last match. Nottinghamshire, chasing 229, were in a desperate position at 66 for five, but their eventual losing margin was so narrow that Lancashire slipped into the last eight under the net run-rate system.

In the quarter-finals Surrey will meet Lancashire, Leicestershire will face Kent, Yorkshire and Durham will battle it out, and Middlesex will take on Essex.

SPENCER OLIVER, who had emergency surgery in London to remove a blood clot from his brain after losing the European super-bantamweight fight, has been taken off a ventilator. Doctors are confident he will make a full recovery.